

NewEvangelists.org

new
evangelists
monthly

February
2015

New Evangelists Monthly #26

February 2015

- [New Evangelists Monthly - February 2015](#)

New Evangelists Monthly - February 2015

- [Forward](#)
...about this eBook
- [When You Give, When You Pray, When You Fast](#)
A Faith-Full Life by Adam Crawford
- [How One Act of Courtesy Changed My Life](#)
by Virginia Lieto
- [Fighting Words](#)
Smaller Manhattans by Christian LeBlanc
- [Questions from a Godson: Who Crucified Jesus Anyway? Is the Pope Really As Pure as He said?](#)
Christ's Faithful Witness by Susan Fox
- [God Pitched His Tent Among Men: The Manner of Christian Prayer versus Muslim Prayer](#)
Christ's Faithful Witness by Larry Fox
- [When He Writes, "Feel Free to..."](#)
The Veil of Chastity by Cindy Hurla
- [A Quantum Leap!](#)
A Spiritual Journey by David Wong
- [Children](#)
Cherishing Everyday Beauty by Sarah ThArAse
- [Little Ones Helping Others From Around the World](#)
Children's Rosary by Blythe Kaufman
- [The Patron Saint of the Klingon Empire](#)
Washed, Sanctified and Justified by Dennis McGeehan
- [Faint Hue of Grace](#)
Faint Hue of Grace by Allison DeWolf
- [The acknowledged differences of Mormonism](#)
Catholic Deacon by Deacon Scott Dodge
- [Blaise's Melody](#)
Conceiving Hope by MC
- [Review of The Didache Bible: Ignatius Bible Edition](#)
Catholic Bibles by Timothy McCormick
- [Writing Round-up](#)
Kitchen table chats by Denise Hunnell
- [What Do You Do When You Can't Sing Anymore?](#)
The Beautiful Music Challenge by Katie O'Keefe

- [**A death in Plan Grande**](#)
Hermano Juancito by John Donaghy
- [**Why not "Spiritual Communion" for most at mega-Masses?**](#)
Te Deum laudamus! by Diane Korzeniewski
- [**Why Catherine Adair is aces in my book: "No person is beyond redemption"**](#)
Leaven For The Loaf by Ellen Kolb
- [**Abortion and Class Discrimination**](#)
Designs by Birgit by Birgit Jones
- [**Whose Calls Are You Taking?**](#)
Theologyisaverb by Elizabeth Reardon
- [**Joy at the Stoplight**](#)
JOY Alive in our hearts by Nancy Ward
- [**Stained Glass Windows**](#)
Busy Catholic Moms by Shannon Vandaveer
- [**"Pseudo-friendship?"**](#)
Declaring the Whole Counsel by Fr. Chori Jonathin Seraiah
- [**Charlie Hebdo and the Pauline Mission**](#)
Association of Pauline Cooperators by Sr. Margaret Obrovac
- [**Making it through Hard Times**](#)
by Tony Agnesi
- [**Today's find: Poppy-seed Bagel**](#)
With Us Still by John Schroeder
- [**Nursing's Soundtrack**](#)
One Thousand Words a Week by Rick Becker
- [**The Sunday Bulletin Indicator: Fact or Fiction?**](#)
Yard Sale of the Mind by Ishmael Alighieri
- [**Trusting in Tin Roofs**](#)
Making It In Vermont by Lisa Laverty
- [**From Anti-Semitism to Anti-Christism; The 21st Century Holocaust is Upon Us**](#)
It Makes Sense to Me by Larry Peterson
- [**Deepening Our Prayer Lives**](#)
Children of The Church by Nicole Ernest
- [**Our Imperfect Marriages**](#)
In Caritas Christiana by Shannon Ball
- [**Freeing Tanner Rose by T. M. Gaouette**](#)
The Koala Bear Writer by Bonnie Way
- [**Fr John Hardon's Catholic Lifetime Reading Plan**](#)
Blog of a Country Priest by Fr. John Corrigan
- [**Grace-filled Tuesdays \(Book Club "Meeting" 1\)**](#)

String of Pearls by Laura Pearl

- [**Announcing Marriage Rx: Our New Marriage Advice Series on CatholicMom**](#)

Can We Cana? by Karee Santos

- [**Mansions and Mothering :: Some Wisdom from St. Teresa of Avila**](#)

Between the Linens by Ashley Woleben

- [**Prayer: 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time**](#)

Fr. Ben's Biblical Blog by Fr. Ben Hadrich

- [**Let's Try Something New**](#)

The Contemplative Catholic Convert by Rich Maffeo

- [**Inspiration**](#)

Miss Em by Emily Hartung

- [**Canticles: Nunc Dimittis \(Canticle of Simeon\)**](#)

Breviary Hymns by Kevin Shaw

- [**Love has to be Learnt**](#)

by David Torkington

- [**7 Ideas for Giving Your Children a Vocations' Mindset**](#)

Saints 365 by Debbie Gaudino

- [**Guiding Our Children to Discover Their Vocation**](#)

Every Home a Monastery by Jessica and Manny Archuleta

- [**Listening for God's Voice**](#)

From the Pulpit of my Life by Ruth Ann Pilney

- [**Friday Penance**](#)

Convert Journal by George M. Sipe

- [**The Loss of Jesus After Passover**](#)

Suffering With Joy by Barbara Schoeneberger

- [**"I don't believe in the deity of Mary nor the saints"**](#)

Brutally Honest by Rick Rice

- [**Don't be Afraid to ...**](#)

His UnEnding Love by Mallory Hoffman

- [**Loving Until It Hurts**](#)

Revolution of Love Blog by Bobbi

- [**Here Comes Hypocrisy \(yet again...\)**](#)

Arnobius of Sicca

- [**Visit the Imprisoned**](#)

Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation by Michael Seagriff

- [**Gratitude Attitude**](#)

by Carolyn Astfalk

- [**If the Second Vatican Council Had Never Happened, Would We Still Have a "New Mass"? -- Quite Possibly**](#)

- [**It is GOD Who Converts**](#)

joy by Melanie Jean Juneau

- [**Whence The Magi: Baby, You'Re Gonna Be A Star Someday**](#)

GONZO HOMILETICS by Fr. Tucker Cordani

- [**March For Life 2015 Surprise**](#)

Peace Garden Mama by Roxane Salonen

- [**Why we choose Catholic schools: A letter to our son**](#)

Catholic Review by Rita Buettner

- [**Bridal Bubbles**](#)

Grace to Paint by Sister Maresa Lilley

- [**Random New Year Thoughts**](#)

V for Victory! by Anita Moore

- [**Boko Haram: Slavery, Death, and Love**](#)

A Catholic Citizen in America by Brian Gill

- [**Traditional Liturgy In Its Post-Vatican II Form - 6: What Went Wrong?**](#)

Monks and Mermaids by Fr. David Bird

- [**Healthy Habits for the New Year Should Include Natural Family Planning**](#)

Plot Line and Sinkers by Ellen Gable Hrkach

- [**On A Failure of Love: "Poor Baby: A Child of the Sixties Looks Back On Abortion"**](#)

Rambling Follower by Allison Salerno

- [**Let's Start at the Very Beginning**](#)

bukas palad by Fr. Adrian Danker

- [**Breeding Like Rabbits - NOT the Catholic Way**](#)

Quiet Consecration by Leslie Klinger

- [**Surprisingly So**](#)

Blogging For A Better Life by Rose O'Donnell

- [**Some thoughts on marriage and culture which need more editing**](#)

Bethune Catholic by Jim Curley

- [**The Ache of Longing**](#)

A Still Small Voice by Zoe Jumonville

- [**Roller Coasters, Puppies, and Learning to Fly!**](#)

beautiful thorns by Lisa Ponchak

- [**Love: Free, Total, Faithful, Fruitful**](#)

Adult Catechesis & Christian Religious Literacy in the Roman Catholic Tradition by Matt McCormick

- [**My 2014 Person of the Year**](#)

Justin's Corner by Justin Soutar

- [**Why I went to the hospital, and why I didn't tell you**](#)

by Margaret Felice

- **[Unplug!](#)**
Journey to Wisdom by Larry T
- **[Sklerocordia: hardness of heart and divorce](#)**
LMS Chairman by Joseph Shaw
- **[Exciting! New Latin Mass Initiative Occruring in Campbellford, Ontario at St. Mary's Church](#)**
Servimus unum Deum by Julian Barkin
- **[Praying as a Disciple](#)**
Bartimaeus' Quiet Place by Bartimaeus Timeo
- **[How to Win the First Battle of Every Day](#)**
by Philip Kosloski
- **[Really SEE Your Kids Through God's Eyes \(Book Review\)](#)**
Happy Little Homemaker by Jen Steed
- **[Gazing Through the Knothole](#)**
Mere Observations by Jeff Walker
- **["Home" School](#)**
Our Home.... Under Mary's Mantle by Emily Davis
- **[Tales from the Substitute: Compassion in Action](#)**
FranciscanMom by Barbara Szyszkiewicz
- **[A Passing Look At Football](#)**
Musings of a Missionary in the Modern World by Sr. Anne Marie Walsh
- **[Joys of a Failure: The Guiding Goodness](#)**
CatholicSoup by Vinny Carr
- **[A Deaf Man Cured](#)**
Bible Meditations by Barbara Hosbach
- **[Notes from the Underground](#)**
My Path to Faith by Ronald Moffat
- **[Don't feel sorry for me...](#)**
La Joie Inattendue by Kimberly Lynch
- **[My Saint 2015](#)**
A Catholic Heart For Home by Niki Chris
- **[The Spirit Within](#)**
Travels of a New Christian by Reese Cumming
- **[Update on 40 weeks](#)**
Small Paul by Paul Smith
- **[Homeschooling is not my vocation {and it isn't yours either}](#)**
Blossoming Joy by Melody Marie
- **[Perfect Love](#)**
A Catholic Moment by Joe LaCombe

Forward

New Evangelists Monthly is an informal, dynamic, crowd-sourced “meta-magazine” showcasing the best posts faithful Catholic bloggers publish each month. Here you will find many different, but faithfully Catholic viewpoints, insights and perspectives.

Contributing authors submit their very best piece from the prior month between subsequent first and second Saturdays. Readers are welcome to visit anytime, even while contributions are still being accepted for a new issue. Back issues are available in the archive.

eBook editions such as this are available within a few days following submission deadlines (the second Saturday of each month). eBook formats include .mobi for Kindle users, .epub for most other eBook readers and .pdf for everyone else.

For the latest edition of *New Evangelists Monthly*, or for more information about this New Evangelization initiative, visit us at:

NewEvangelists.org

COPYRIGHT NOTICE: Regardless of where you enjoy *New Evangelists Monthly*, either online or in this format, note that copyright is exclusively retained by the respective contributing authors. If you wish to use or redistribute any of their content, please contact them directly for licensing information.

When You Give, When You Pray, When You Fast [at A Faith-Full Life]

It is perhaps interesting to note that Christ never commands his disciples to read the Scriptures daily. Living in a culture which was largely illiterate and lacked the technology to produce books, it probably wouldn't have done much good anyway 😊 The vast majority of the people received the Word of God by hearing – not by reading. *“But how are men to call upon him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without a preacher? ...So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ.”*¹

Which is why, when Jesus preaches the Sermon on the Mount, he says to his audience, “You have heard it said...” not, “You have read...”

He doesn't tell His disciples to read their bibles daily (there wouldn't be a “bible” for another 400 years) because in Jesus's time daily bible reading wasn't the hallmark of a deeply spiritual life. Rather, there were three things which *were* the hallmark of a profoundly religious life. Three things that were so foundational to a meaningful religious life that Jesus doesn't even command them, but rather He **presumes** them.

“When you give...”²

Did you notice that? Christ doesn't command the crowd to give, rather He presumes that they are doing it already. We will see this same presumption repeated with each of these three practices. These practices are so foundational to spiritual life, so *necessary*, that the practice itself goes without saying. In a similar fashion, when discussing the practices which are necessary for physical life we could say, “When you breathe...”, or, “When you eat...”, or “When you sleep...”

These are the presumed necessities of a life which is spiritually alive, and giving is first on the list. No wonder I'm so bad at it. In my defense I'm Scottish. I prefer to think of myself as frugal rather than cheap, but either way, giving doesn't come easily for me. And yet this is what the Christian life is to be characterized by. And almsgiving is only a very small part of what it means to give of ourselves. We are to give of our possessions, our forgiveness, our love, *our very lives*. We are to be people who give in a way that is as fundamental as breathing. Truth be told, I've got a long way to go.

But when we do give alms it is to be in secret – without asking for, or receiving, any recognition for our charity.

“When you pray...”³

Again, it's not a question of if, but when. Luckily, we have the words of St. Paul to tell us when. *“Rejoice always, **pray constantly**, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”*⁴ Other translations render it pray without ceasing. And, St. Paul claims that this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us. Having been raised among Christians who really emphasize reading the bible constantly, the practice of constant prayer has been much more difficult for me.

I also come from a background that viewed prayer in a very constrained way. Prayer was our communication with God and it was felt that it should be largely improvised by the one praying. Within the Catholic tradition I have found that prayer encompasses a much richer definition. Prayers can be improvised or rote, from the Psalms or the saints, entreaties to God or any of His Holy ones who are with Him, meditations on God, or even sung, for as the old saying goes, “*he who sings, prays twice.*” With this much richer definition, it becomes much easier to find ways to pray without ceasing.

But again, we are told by Christ to pray in secret and not for show. To pray with intent and not with empty words. And then we are given the great gift of the *Our Father* to help guide our prayers.

“When you fast...”⁵

This is a discipline that I have actually practiced with some degree of regularity throughout my life depending on the season. Of course you wouldn’t know it to look at me. Turns out when I’m not fasting, I’m more or less glutinous in my eating habits. This is why Christ reminds us that, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.*”⁶ Prayer is more important than eating and God’s words offer greater sustenance than bread, hence the practice of fasting.

Archbishop Fulton Sheen once remarked that, “*Fasting detaches you from this world. Prayer reattaches you to the next world.*” I would suggest that the practice of giving also detaches you from this world. So we have two practices which help us to disengage from the things of this world and one which helps us to re-engage with the next world and the life to come. And again, there is the injunction of Jesus to fast in secret, “...that your fasting may not be seen by men but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.”⁷

So Why All The Secrecy?

If these spiritual disciplines are so fundamental as to be presumed, so necessary to the religious life that they go unsaid; why all the secrecy? The answer is quite simple when we ask the question, “*Who are you doing these things for?*” If you are merely wanting to impress men with your deep spirituality and religious piety – congratulations! Job accomplished!

But, if you are truly wanting to please God and engage in a lifelong process of sanctification, then the acclaim of men will be very much besides the point, and may in fact lead to further difficulties – namely the sins of pride and hypocrisy. So, when you give, when you fast, and when you pray – do it in secret that your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Far from being just spiritual disciplines to practice during the lenten season, these practices are absolutely essential to our spiritual life in the same way that breathing, eating, and sleeping are absolutely necessary for our physical life.

!

1. Romans 10:14 & 17 [↔](#)

2. [Matthew 6:2](#)

3. [Matthew 6:5](#)

4. [1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)

5. [Matthew 6:16](#)

6. [Matthew 4:4b](#)

7. [Matthew 6:18](#)

This contribution is available at <http://adamncrawford.com/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

How One Act of Courtesy Changed My Life



One act of courtesy changed my life forever on January 21, 1977 – 38 years ago today! I was working as a teller at a bank on that Friday, and my co-worker and good friend, Maureen, said that we were going out together that night to have some fun at a local nightclub. We were both single, unattached college girls, and I knew she was trying to get me back into the dating scene. I said, “You can’t meet a nice guy in a bar.” Reluctantly, I went along. When we got to the nightclub, we found our two friends, Billy and Denise, sitting in a booth and we joined them. They had just gotten engaged, so it turned into a little celebration. As we were sitting there talking, two guys, who knew Billy, walked up to the table. One guy was named Biff and the other guy was named Nick. I talked with Biff most of the night, and Maureen talked with Nick.

At the end of the evening, when it was time to go, everyone quickly got up to leave, except Nick. I saw everyone moving to the coat check room, yet Nick lingered behind. Not to be rude, I stopped to wait for Nick to catch up and we met the others at the coat check. That simple gesture of waiting for Nick did not go unnoticed by him. It illuminated an aspect of my character that intrigued him. He wanted to know more. He wanted to know me better.

We all agreed to get together the next week at the same place and this time I spent the whole evening talking with Nick. From that point on, Nick and I were inseparable. We dated for 2 ½ years, and on July 21, 1979 we were married. Thirty-eight years later, we still celebrate the day we met. Nick is a true romantic! He’s taking me out for dinner tonight! Courtesy pays dividends!

God was definitely present in the nightclub on January 21, 1977, when He presented Nick to me and me to Nick. He has been present in our lives every day since. My parish priest recently gave a homily highlighting the fact that Divine moments in our life, those gifts from God, get etched in our memories, down to the littlest detail, forever cherished and remembered. The evening of January 21, 1977 is one of those Divine moments in my life.

Side Note: Not only have Nick and I been married for 35 ½ years, but Billy and Denise will be married 37 years in June, AND Maureen married Biff, and they will also be married 37 years this May. God certainly was busy on January 21, 1977 bestowing Divine moments in a nightclub!

This post also appears on .

This contribution is available at <http://virginialieto.com/how-one-act-of-courtesy/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Fighting Words [at Smaller Manhattans]



Understand?

Isn't it remarkable: the occasions that Jesus' own people want to kill him follow instances when He quotes Scripture couplets to them? Of

course

it's remarkable; let's look at 3 cases.

In Luke 4 (edited), Jesus begins his public ministry after 40 days in the desert: "Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee, and a report concerning him went out through all the surrounding country. 16 And he came to Nazareth...on the sabbath day. And he read from...Isaiah. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." 22 And all spoke well of him: "Is not this Joseph's son?" 23 And he said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Physician, heal yourself; what we have heard you did at Capernaum, do here also in your own country.'" 24 And he said, "Truly...no prophet is acceptable in his own country. 25 But in truth, I tell you, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when ...there came a great famine over all the land; 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." 28 When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and put him out of the city, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built, that they might throw him off a precipice. 30 But passing through the midst of them he went away."

Mark 11: And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons; 16 and he would not allow any one to carry anything through the temple. 17 And he taught, and said to them, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of thieves." 18 And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and sought a way to kill him."

Mark 14: The high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" 62 And Jesus said, "I AM; and you will see the Son of man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of

heaven." 63 And the high priest tore his garments, and said, "Why do we still need witnesses? 64 You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?" And they all condemned him as deserving death."

Jesus expected at least some of his hearers to be very familiar with the Scriptures; familiar enough to figure out Jesus' meaning behind the verses.

In Luke 4, these are the fightin' words: "...there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when ...there came a great famine over all the land; 26 and Elijah was sent to none of them but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian." What Jesus means is, "Y'all know these stories, right? Then ya betta not bank on the Messiah doin' ya any favors. On two prior famous occasions, God overlooked the Chosen People and helped pagans instead. So get wit' John da Baptis' program, an' produce good fruit before the axe cuts ya down, an' in the fire ya go."

Oh dear, they did not take that very well.

In Mark 11, Jesus quotes Isaiah and Jeremiah: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations. But you have made it a den of thieves." That is, "Let me remind you Temple bigshots that Isaiah prophesied that someday

everyone

would be welcome in God's house. And Jeremiah says your disrespect for the Temple is so bad that God will abandon Jerusalem just as he abandoned Shiloh. Someday everyone will pray in God's house, but his house won't be

here

." Ouch.

In Mark 14, Jesus probably answers the high chief in Hebrew, saying I AM as a reference to this bit of Exodus 3: "Moses said to God, 'If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?'" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM I AM/ אֲנִי אֲנִי." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, 'I AM/ אֲנִי has sent me to you.'" Thus Jesus identifies himself with God/ YHWH/ אֲנִי (You can see how close God's name is to I AM in Hebrew.) That's bad enough, but then Jesus quotes from this passage in Daniel 7: "I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed." Now Jesus is really askin' for it. "You? You're I AM? You preposterous bumpkin. You're going get power and dominion and lord it over us in your kingdom?" Utterly aggravated, Caiaphas tears his robe in frustration.

Jesus speaks *in* the Bible; he also speaks *through* the Bible.

This contribution is available at <http://platytera.blogspot.com/2015/01/fighting-words.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Questions from a Godson: Who Crucified Jesus Anyway? Is the Pope Really As Pure as He said? [at Christ's Faithful Witness]

My 16-year-old Catholic godson sent me some questions recently. He is reading the whole Bible cover to cover. Here is our dialogue.

Godson Ben: All right, well bear with me on this, I'm going to touch on a bit of history. I tend to ask very long and complicated questions, so apologies in advance.

The Romans originated from Italy, they took Britain from the Briton Celtic people around 60-78 AD. While the Romans took over and the Britons ended up accepting their new overlords, the other Celtic tribes kept struggling, refusing to give up so easily. The Romans/Brits were the ones to kill Jesus. In the end the Briton and Roman people mingled, so the modern day British people are mutts of the two, perhaps thrown in with a splash of other ethnic groups (Been a long time, after all.) (Ben understands breeding. He raises dogs)

The Roman/Brit people continued to then fight the Insular Celts, enslaving them and selling them in the era of slaves for the U.S. to build their railroad. To this day, the majority of the Brits aren't very religious, and even most Italians live their lives without caring about religion and morals. It's only an old stereotype that Italians care about such things. And the Vatican City is located in Italy, what was Rome. How is it not hypocritical, when the people at the Vatican who claim to be so spiritually strong, devout believers are the same people who killed God in the flesh all those years ago?

Susan Fox: Dear Ben, My apologies. I also tend to give long and rambling answers, but I do reach a conclusion.

It was the Roman/Jews (Roman authority and the Jewish leaders) who killed Jesus, not the Roman/Brits. You could travel in any known country of the world that existed at that time and still be in the Roman Empire. So when Jesus, Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt in the Bible, it was like running from Colorado to Washington State. They were still in the Roman Empire. So was the British Isles.

Many, including Catholic bishops, are ignorant of this fact as they associate Mary, Joseph and Jesus with "illegal aliens" and "refugees" when they crossed into Egypt. But they were not illegal. They fled from one state to another: they were still in the same old Roman Empire. This is important to know if someone

should tell you that Mary, Joseph and Jesus were illegal aliens and we should let illegal aliens into this country for that reason. Mary, Joseph and Jesus scrupulously obeyed the law. They did not break it. Remember that when you go into law enforcement.

Who killed Jesus? Jesus was a Jew. There was a Jewish authority there called the Sanhedrin. They were the Jewish cops, but in a religious sense. They were unhappy with Jesus because He claimed to be God. He didn't say, "I am God." He was subtler than that, but within the context of Jewish history the old Sanhedrin got the message:

"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!" (John 8:58)

God introduced Himself to Moses in the Old Testament, as "I AM WHO AM." *God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'*" So the Jews immediately recognized that Christ was saying he was God when He said, "I am!" Plus how could a mere human have existed before his ancestor?

Jesus also forgave sins. Only God can forgive sins, so this outraged the Jews, who didn't realize it was the proper action for Jesus to take since He was True God and True Man. See [Twilight's Confession](#) for the story of how this divine power was handed down to our Catholic priests by Jesus Himself!

Jesus was killed for blasphemy by the Jewish authority because he made Himself to be God. The Romans got involved because the Jews didn't have the authority to inflict capital punishment. So they tricked the Roman authority into doing it for them.

The first Christians, however, were also Jews, and we Catholics are grateful for their faith, which they handed down to us.

Got that? Jews are our older brothers in faith, and we need to respect them. Jesus was a Jew. Mary was a Jew, and the first Christians were Jews. We do not blame the Jewish people for Christ's death. That's Hitler's thinking, although he had no love for Christ at all. If Hitler loved Christ, he would not have persecuted Christ's own relatives – the Jews.



Whew, the British are completely blameless for the murder of Christ even if they have some Roman blood in their veins. Frankly, who doesn't have Roman blood at this point? Those Romans spread their blood all over the civilized world.

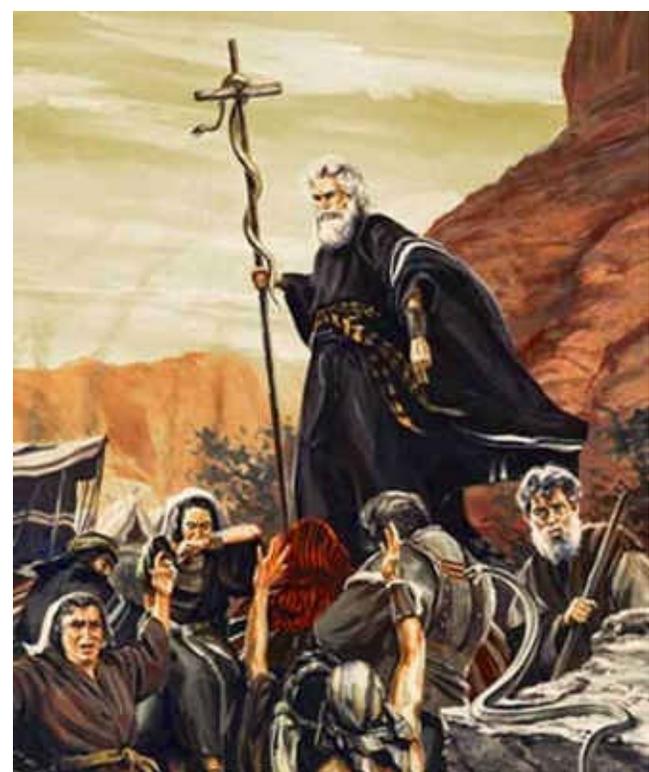
That is the historical context of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. But spiritually, we have to remember that Jesus Christ volunteered for the job of dying for all men's sins. He allowed the crucifixion to take place. Remember what he told Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor:

*So Pilate said to Him, "You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?" Jesus answered, "**You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.**" (John 19:10-11) He referred to the Sanhedrin.*

Perhaps this understanding is for later in your life. But I had a good friend who was in the Sacrament of Confession, and she understood that her sins, her own trespasses had crucified Jesus Christ. Father asked her this question, "Whose sins did you think crucified Jesus?"

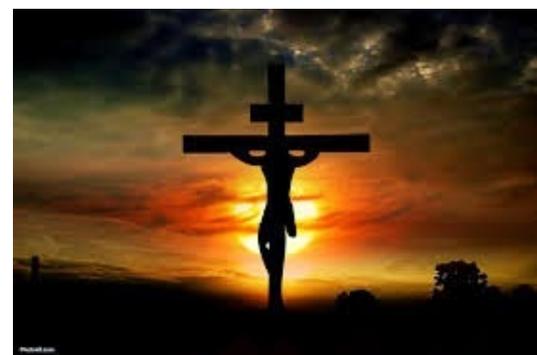
"Why, Father, I thought it was somebody else's sins that crucified Jesus Christ!" she exclaimed. So who crucified Jesus? Anyone who commits a sin.

Maybe you have encountered this Exodus story in the Old Testament. The People of Israel were complaining against God about the food He was giving them (manna). So God sent fiery serpents among the people. Many died. But Moses interceded for his people and God told him to make an image of the snake that bit them and when they looked at the image, they would be cured.



"Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived." (Num.21:6-9)

It sounds almost idolatrous, doesn't it? But everything in the Old Testament has to be understood in the context of the the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is one Author of Scripture over thousands of years, and that is the Holy Spirit. He shaped events and inspired men to write about them. That bronze image that God gave them took the poisonous bite from their bodies.



But then God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, and when He was raised up on the cross He took the poison of sin from their hearts! When Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross, they also looked at Him Whom they had pierced (with real nails), and the poison of their sin was taken from them. They – in short -- experienced regret and sorrow for their actions. The Epistles near the end of the Bible will explain this

better than I, but think of it as potty training a cat. The cat piddles somewhere in the house, and you take the cat and rub its nose in it. The cat deeply regrets that experience and starts going outside or using the cat box.

When mankind looks at the broken Body of Christ on the Cross, and they see what the Innocent and Merciful God suffered to save them from their sins, they kinda lose the taste for sin. Hey, it isn't so fun any more.

Godson Ben: I understand it may not be entirely fair to think ill of people based on the sins of their fathers, but I don't like people who are all heathens, seem to act cocky among other things, and even the Pope himself is fine with gays. What do you think of all of this? For clarification, I essentially want to know if, in your opinion, I am wrong? If they haven't changed as a people, when you look at the Brits they still want to conquer Ireland, and if it was socially acceptable in the eyes of the U.S. they would likely re-enslave them.

“Stop judging, that you may not be judged. For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother's eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove that splinter from your eye,' while the wooden beam is in your eye? You hypocrite, remove the wooden beam from your eye first; then you will see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother's eye.” (Matthew 7:1-5) This invites me to pass judgment, be skeptical and speak freely, so long as I am not hypocritical.

And honestly I question whether or not the Pope is truly as pure as it is said, if he isn't willing to quite simply say what is unnatural and wrong to be gay (when the Bible clearly states such, Leviticus 20:13)



Susan Fox: Dear Ben, I think Brits today are interested in beer ... and maybe Islam. I have a good friend in the United Kingdom and he tweets me pictures of his beer. He drinks fascinating kinds of beer. I tweet him pictures of my grocery cart and its price. So it would seem I am interested in the cost of my groceries,

which keeps going up!



Islam is interesting to them because they have many Muslims in their country, and some have killed innocent British civilians. Recently, a few Muslims killed some French magazine cartoonists, and the Brits followed this event on the telly in the British pub. They are justifiably worried about their families. And we should pray for them.

So in reality Brits are more concerned now about Muslims than they are about the Irish. But I promise I will ask my British friend about the Irish next time we speak on Twitter.



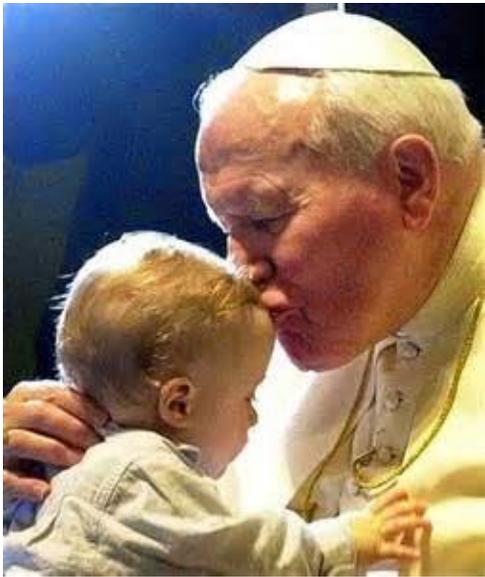
I'm glad you are asking questions about Pope Francis. I have read almost every recent article about Pope Francis. I have a friend who sends them to me regularly, so I am the right person to ask about Pope Francis! LOL.

The articles fall into three categories:

1. Factual accounts of the pope's true feelings and opinions,
2. Liberal fantasies of the pope's feelings and
3. Angry/doubtful conservative Catholic opinions of the pope's falsely reported opinions.

Don't fall into the third category. You see the liberal press has a totally false image of Pope Francis. They think he is going to change the Catholic Church's doctrine on homosexuality. That is fantasy.

On same-sex "marriage," the pope said that it is an "anti-value and an anthropological regression." It is a weakening of the institution of marriage, an institution that has existed for thousands of years and is "forged according to nature and anthropology." He means that marriage between one man and one woman is the way that God designed the human race. To enter into a same sex relationship is to go backwards, to regress, to devolve.



Pope Saint John Paul II wrote a fascinating book called “Theology of the Body.” And it says that “man” is not just male. No, according to Genesis, which you probably have already read, God made “man” male **and** female. That means that “man” is not present in his completeness unless there is both man and woman. Your godfather, Larry Fox, explains it this way: “Homosexuality is an attack on the Holy Trinity, on the very nature of God Himself.” God is a Community of Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God generates Himself within Himself as He is eternal.

Men and women are finite. So “man” has within his body the power to generate man because we are made in the image and likeness of God. But only male and female “man” together can generate “man.” Two males or two females are structurally incompatible and cannot generate another man. Therefore homosexuality is anti-trinitarian, against the very nature of God, who is fruitful.

Larry added that when men and women can’t have children, they experience a sense of loss because they want to live in the image of God, Who is fruitful within Himself. But they cannot generate man physically within their bodies. This makes them sad.

Also remember that intimacy is not something to be taken casually since it so closely mimics the life of God Himself. The only place for sex is in marriage, and in that context, it is a very holy act.

That some people regard the pope as favoring homosexuality is total fantasy. They are not living in reality. I have read the LGBT press, and they actually cried out to the pope to go to Uganda, where they passed an anti-homosexuality act, and chastise those Catholic bishops who did not support homosexual activity.

However, the reason this false image of Pope Francis has arisen is because in 2013 when he was returning from World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, he told reporters: “If a person is gay and seeks the

Lord and has good will, who am I to judge that person? These persons must never be marginalized and they must be integrated into society."

This is practical implementation of that Bible quote you gave me. *"Stop judging, that you may not be judged."*

The pope is very concerned about all the children of Adam and Eve. He is not just the spiritual father of the Catholics. No, he is spiritual father to everyone. He realizes that for real change to take place in a man's heart, he must receive love and respect for himself as a person, not as an activity. Hence, I personally don't use the word "gay" to describe anyone because it denotes an activity not a person.

We don't love homosexual actions, nor do we love the identity they have chosen, but we love them. Do you understand? Love the sinner. Hate the sin. Remember I told you the way to change your mother's behavior is to see the good things she does and be grateful.

People who self identify as homosexuals need love. They need us to look for and find the good that God has done in them. The secular world doesn't understand that one can love a person struggling to overcome a bad habit, and still condemn his actions. So they report the Pope's acceptance of a person, and twist that information into acceptance of his sin.

Now if you visited Pope Francis, wouldn't you expect him to love you? Would you expect him to tell you how much he appreciates your faults? Not at all. He'd tell you to change those!

Godson Ben: When I say I dislike certain ethnic groups, what I mean is I will not, for example, hang around them. That does not mean I would turn a blind eye if one of them were to be, for example, mugged in an alley, for then I would be doing equal wrong. Stereotypes exist with some merit, and while they can't all be bad, how could I honestly like them as a people when they still demonstrate their ill-will, when people openly say my beliefs are invalid, when a majority of people encourage abominable acts, and so forth?

Susan Fox: Dear Ben, Hmm, are these Brits and Italians you don't like? It is necessary to avoid some neighborhoods dominated by one ethnic group. The neighborhood my husband grew up in in Baltimore is now strictly off limits because of crime. My sister-in-law drove me to the edge of the street where his family home was located and refused to go any farther because she was afraid. That is prudent fear.

My husband's father used to leave him in certain dangerous neighborhoods while he went to do work, and yup Larry got beat up. That was imprudence.

But when you speak of the immorality of modern Brits and Italians, it is not true they were never religious. Before King Henry VIII, the British were devoutly Catholic people. The Norwegians and Swedes were too. But it was kings and money. The kings ripped the faith from the people to get the Church's money. And God allowed it because He Himself actually prefers to clothe His Bride, the Church, in joy, not riches. There were many great Catholic martyrs in those countries.

I visited a formerly Catholic Cathedral in England, and on the walls they had written (during the Protestant Reformation), "The Eucharist is NOT the Body of Christ. It is a symbol." They ripped the Catholic faith from the people and now England watches the television and worries about their Muslim neighbors. Don't doubt it's happening here too. Detroit has a large Muslim population. And Muslim men are taught not to respect Christian and secular women. They form rape gangs even in Seattle.



Sweden has the highest annual asylum and immigration rate in all of Europe. It used to be a very family friendly country. As a young woman, I traveled safely by myself through Sweden in 1973-74, but now apparently one in four Swedish women face at least one rape from a Muslim immigrant. Sweden has the second highest number of rapes in the world after South Africa at 53 per 100,000 women. It was a pretty country, but I never want to return.

Many Italians have lost the faith. They are not having children. If they don't convert their hearts, their race may die out. But Italians did once have a devout Catholic faith and they had nothing to do with the crucifixion of Christ. The Catholic Church is headquartered in Rome because Jesus decided it.

Jesus said, "You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hell will not

overpower it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."



Jesus meant He would place His own authority on Peter's shoulders and those of his successors, the popes. But I find it amusing that Jesus literally built His Church's headquarters on St. Peter's physical body. St. Peter was martyred in Rome and buried there. "Holy men ... took down his body secretly and put it under the terebinth tree near the Naumachia, in the place which is called the Vatican," according to a 5th century source.



In 1939, the first pope's bones were discovered under St. Peter's Basilica inside the Vatican City where the pope says Mass. Fragments found in the necropolis under St. Peter's Basilica (in the Vatican) were "identified in a way that we can consider convincing," said Pope Paul VI in 1968. They were found in a funeral monument with an engraving that said, "Peter is here."

Where St. Peter's bones are located is a heavenly "X" marks the spot where the True Church is headquartered! What a blessing!



This contribution is available at <http://christsfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/01/questions-from-godson-who-crucified.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

God Pitched His Tent Among Men: The Manner of Christian Prayer versus Muslim Prayer [at Christ's Faithful Witness]



“What manner of prayer did Jesus teach his disciples?” a Muslim asked me on Facebook. I thought about the question from the perspective of John the Baptist who evidently taught his disciples how to pray. This is certain since Jesus’ disciples approached Him and asked, “*Teach us how to pray as John taught his disciples.*” (Luke 11:1) Then I asked, “What is this Muslim focusing on in relation to prayer? Was it a question about method and form, content, location, duration, quantity or quality that was important?” The question did not seem to suggest a tender relationship between Allah and men.

After reading the chapter “teachings on prayer” in *Jesus and Mohammad; Profound Differences and Surprising Similarities* by Mark Gabriel PhD, I began to understand why it was so important for the Muslim to have an answer to his question.

Muslims are commanded to pray to Allah fives times a day (raka'ah). Islamic legend states that Mohammed was taken up to Allah in a dream and Allah instructed Mohammed to command the believers to pray 50 times a day.



In the Islamic legend, Mohammed ascended through the seven heavens and along the way saw at various discrete levels apart from Allah, the person of Jesus, Moses, and other “Muslim” prophets. On his journey down from where Allah dwelt, Moses requested from Mohammed, “What did Allah ask?” Mohammed replied, “Allah instructed me to command 'believers' to pray 50 times a day.”

Moses told Mohammed that he (Moses) led his people out of Egypt towards the Promised Land and knew

“believers would not pray 50 times a day.” So Mohammed went back to Allah to ask for a lesser duty. Mohammed -- with the advice of Moses -- managed to whittle the prayer requirement down to the number five.

The legendary bargaining between Mohammed and Allah over quantity of prayer inversely parallels the exchange between Abraham and the Lord (represented by three angels) who was about to execute judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 16: 1-33). Mohammed was trying to water down the requirements for the believer. Abraham was trying to save the cities scheduled for destruction.

Abraham begins the exchange with the Lord by asking, *“Will you sweep away the innocent with the guilty? Suppose there were fifty innocent people in the city; would you wipe out the place rather than spare it for the sake of the fifty innocent people within it?”* This exchange went back and forth until the Lord states, *“For the sake of those ten, I will not destroy it.”* In such manner did Abraham plead for God's mercy for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. Ironically, Abraham was not successful as God could not find 10 innocent men.

Allah commanded “the five” and sent the angel Gabriel to teach Mohammed the manner of prayer. Mohammed then explained to his followers that this prayer (recited five times a day) was a duty from Allah.

Mohammed led his followers in prayer five times a day to demonstrate the sincerity of the message. Mohammed taught his followers when to say the prayer during the course of the day, the manner of washings, the location, the content and when an exception was permitted based upon circumstances, including while at the mosque, away from the mosque, and while performing jihad. (Surah 4:34; 4:101-103, and 5:6) Mohammed’s instructions on prayer are integral to the life of the “believer” since “the five” prayer times manifest obedience to Allah.



But the Islamic approach is wooden and non-relational compared to the approach of the Christian, who comes to understand that God dwells intimately with His people. The Muslim doesn't know if Allah hears his prayer or not.

Jesus teaches his disciples that God already knows what's in their heart and will listen to them. He says, *“And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men, I tell you the truth, they received their reward in full. But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your*

Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” (Matthew 6: 5:8)



Jesus then taught his disciples to pray to God as a Father, not as a taskmaster as Allah demands: *"Our Father in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give to us this day our daily bread and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil one."* (Matthew 6:9)

The word that Jesus uses for "Father" is "Abba" which literally means "Daddy" in Hebrew. Jesus told his disciples that God was their Father by creation, grace, and providence. The gift that we receive from God the Father is God Himself in the Holy Spirit, *"What father among you, if his son asks for bread, would give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish, would give him a snake instead of the fish? You being evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more you're Father in heaven will give to you the Holy Spirit."* (Luke 11:11)

The Holy Spirit that Jesus spoke about is the same Spirit that overshadowed the waters of creation in the book of Genesis 1:2 and which rested upon Jesus (like a dove) at His Baptism in the River Jordan by John the Baptist (Mark 1:10).

This same Holy Spirit -- while indwelling within the heart of the disciples -- encourages and enables the disciple to speak to God as "Abba Father." St. Paul writes: *"But if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that make you a slave again to fear; but you received the Spirit of Sonship. And by him we cry, Abba Father. The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children, heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in the sufferings in order that we may also share in his Glory."* (Romans 8:13-17)

The Holy Spirit which comes from God Our Father is identified as the breath of God, which is an image of intimacy. God breathed into the nostrils of Adam (shaped from clay). God the Holy Spirit animates our being (body and soul). Jesus tells his disciples, "Trust in God as a child trusts in his own Daddy and He will give you an increase of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit."

The Holy Spirit present at the creation of the world, *"moving over the waters,"* is the same Holy Spirit which participates along with the Father and the Son in the re-creation (sanctification) of the human person.



Mohammed instructed his followers to wash before prayer but he could not give to his followers the gift of God's Holy Spirit.

Mohammed's washing simply dealt with the removal of dirt from the body. In contrast, the washing of the Holy Spirit -- while moving over the waters of Baptism -- saves "the initiate" like the waters of Noah's Ark saved Noah and his family: *"In it only a few people, eight in all were saved through water and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also -- not the removal of dirt from the body but in a pledge response of a good conscience towards God. It (baptism) saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone in the heaven and is at God's right hand -- with the angels, authorities and power in submission to Him."* (1 Peter 3:19-22)

The Holy Spirit rested upon Moses and Mount Sinai with the giving of the Law and its ratification. He rested upon the Ark of the Covenant once it was constructed and dedicated. (Exodus 40:34) It is the same Holy Spirit which rested on the Temple dedicated by Solomon. While dedicating the Temple, King Solomon asked the assembled people, *"Will God indeed dwell with men upon the earth? If the heaven and heavens of heavens will not suffice thee, what then is this house that I have built?"* (II Chronicles 6:18).



In each instance throughout the Old and New Testament, the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit by cloud, fire, and breath (wind) manifested the dwelling of God among humanity. The pattern continues in the most marvelous way within the New Testament.

The Angel Gabriel said to Mary, *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born of you will be called, the Son of God."* (Luke 1:35) In case the point is missed, Matthew writes about the Mary's conception of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit, *"And all this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet, 'The Virgin shall be with child and will give birth to a son, and they call him Emmanuel - which means God with us.'"* (Matthew 1:22-23) **Yes, through the power of the Holy Spirit and Mary' yes, God pitched His tent among humanity in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, Son of God and Son of Mary.**

John the Baptist told members of the Sanhedrin that he baptized with water, but the One to follow him would baptize with the Holy Spirit. Jesus reiterated the words of John the Baptist to his disciples, *“For John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit.”* (Acts 1: 5) And so it was on Pentecost when 120 of them were gathered in the upper room. The Holy Spirit descended upon them with the rushing of a mighty wind from heaven. Tongues of living fire rested upon each of them and they began to proclaim the Good News to the multitude of pilgrims in Jerusalem, something which never happened in Islamic history.

When the people heard the message they said to Peter and the other apostles, *“What shall we do?”* And Peter responded, *“Repent and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of you sins. And you will receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit. This promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord will call.”* (Acts 2: 38)

Through Word and Water (Baptism), the Gift of the Holy Spirit is given to men, women, and children. God speaking through the Prophet Ezekiel stated: *“I shall pour clean water over you and you will be cleansed. I shall cleanse you of all your defilement and all your idols. I shall give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a new heart of flesh instead. I shall put my spirit in you and make you keep my laws and sincerely respect my observances.”* (Ezekiel 36:25-27)

God promised that He would put His Spirit within the hearts of men. This promise is fulfilled through the Person of Jesus of Nazareth since *“In Him the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in bodily form.”* (Colossians 2:9) Christians receive a divine Person in faith and in prayer. Muslims do not.

This contribution is available at <http://christfaithfulwitness.blogspot.com/2015/01/god-pitched-his-tent-among-men-manner.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

When He Writes, "Feel Free to..." [at The Veil of Chastity]

Many of you are participating in online dating. What should you do when somewhere in the exchange, the guy says, "*Feel free to call/text/message me.*" I hear this from many girls who get confused about what it means. What should you do when a guy puts the ball in your court?

Lukewarm

I was just writing to a girl the other day and I told her that I hate to be the Debbie Downer. I am sure some girls think my advice is to be too harsh on guys. But, it is a pattern I see. If a guy is putting the ball in the girl's court without any intention of risking himself in the pursuit, then it usually means that [he is lukewarm in his interest](#).

It usually means that his feelings are such that if the girl takes the bait and initiates, then he is **'fine'** with it. She may be able to keep him occupied and from feeling lonely while he keeps his eyes open for someone he can feel passionate about.

As you can imagine, this is a tough pill to swallow for the girl....especially when she is attracted to him and hopeful of a positive outcome.

Smiley Face

Another girl was texting with a guy who kept putting the ball in her court. He was one of those "*feel free to text me.*" kind of guys. They had gone on one date and then he would contact her sporadically.

I told her to just respond with a smiley face. So she did this even though her mother disagreed. But, in the end, the guy eventually gave up. It could be said that he stopped **'messaging with her.'** All the half-hearted lobs he was tossing her made her feel that she needed to be the one to keep the ball in play. It made her doubt herself. It really messed with her. I felt that, after a certain amount of back and forth, the only way to respond to this guy was with a smile.

Risk

I have shared before that Gregg gave me his phone number but he never said, "*Feel free to call me.*" Instead he said, "*Here is my phone number in the event you are not comfortable giving me yours.*" This is different. He took **my preferences** into consideration and revealed that he was willing to be the one to call and take that risk.

I feel that men who put the 'pursuit' ball in the girl's court are unwilling to take a risk. And, isn't that really what dating requires? But, in order to risk, the guy has to feel that the payoff is worth it. And, then he has to be ready and willing to take it.

The 3 R's

I wrote [a post back in July](#) which described **the 3 R's** which are needed before a guy will take that risk. He needs to be **Resourceful, Ready and Realistic**. It is fine if a guy is not motivated to pursue you. In

fact, he should only pursue you if he is truly interested in you. But, the only way for his half-hearted ‘feel free to’ lobs to stop is for you to interpret the signs and realize what is going on.

The Veil

I haven’t mentioned the veil in a while so some of you may not know this little theory of mine. I invite you to [check it out](#) as a way to stay encouraged the next time a guy says “*Feel free to.*” No, my dear girl, the one that God has for you will not take such a chance by putting the ball in your court. He will take the risk and pursue you. If he says “feel free to” then **feel free** to ignore his half-hearted invitation. :)

If you are in need of encouragement or advice, my email is theveilofchastity@gmail.com

God love and bless you!

This contribution is available at <http://theveilofchastity.com/2015/01/23/when-he-writes-feel-free-to/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

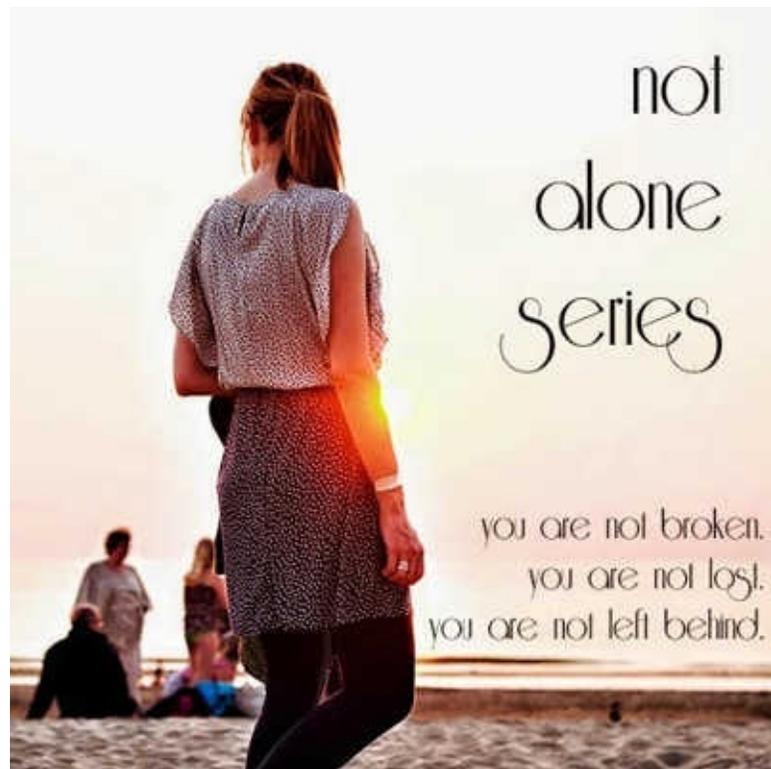
| [Contents](#) |

A Quantum Leap! [at A Spiritual Journey]

I heard verse 5a from Psalm 8 read at Mass this morning: *What is man that you are mindful of him?* I was alone in this vast universe, lost and helpless on this little planet Earth. Then Christ came to me and all things changed ~ now I coexist with God and will be one with him forever! What am I that he is mindful of me? It is love, of course. I can't call this my stroke of luck because God had wanted it and everyone else can have it too. But it is definitely the greatest cause for my rejoicing!

This contribution is available at <http://journeyofimperfectsaint.blogspot.com/2015/01/a-quantum-jump.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Children [at Cherishing Everyday Beauty]



Do you have children in your life?

What is your relationship with them like?

Do you have godchildren, and how do you form a relationship with them?

Does having children in (or not in) your day-to-day life make you feel happy, wistful, or wary of having your own someday?

Have I mentioned on this blog before that I love children?

Oh, I have? M'kay, just wanted to be sure. *grins*

This is my third year working directly with children (2.5-6 year olds), albeit my first at my current school. I have one nephew who is 10 months old. I have no godchildren presently. Yep: children influence my life on the daily.

They *simplify* my life.

They help me to *see more clearly*.

Because young children who are below the age of reason still wear the purity of their spotless Baptismal gown and cannot differentiate between parental love and the love of God, they -- in their complete and total innocence -- reveal to me the love of my God.

It's so humbling to consider how profoundly God shows us His love through the littlest -- if only in stature -- of His children. Yet He chooses these precious souls to teach us big people the greatest of lessons: love. And how to love ***well***.

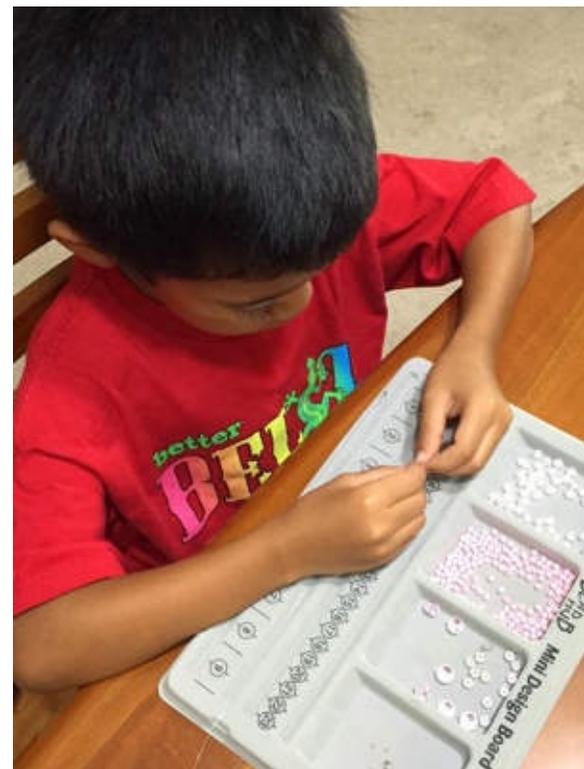
Mind you, working with children is not all lace and roses. Children are not God. They simply are His instruments and, due to their sweet innocence and purity, are able to respond generously. They are each still their own person, still human, and still liable to become upset and even unconsolable, but that does not detract from their beauty. Or their innocence.

Jesus loves children. All of them; even the tallest. But the littlest ones teach me the greatest lessons.



This contribution is available at <http://cherishingeverydaybeauty.blogspot.com/2015/01/not-alone-series-children.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Little Ones Helping Others From Around the World [at Children's Rosary]



Recently an email came from a mom and her 7 year old son. They were interested in helping the Children's Rosary by making rosaries. The timing was perfect as we had just sent out several boxes of rosaries to our Children's Rosary groups in Kenya at Christmas time and our supplies were low. In writing back to this lovely mom and her son, I asked where they were located and the response came as a surprise. She wrote we are from Southeast Asia-Singapore to be specific.

Even though we have groups sprinkled around the globe reaching all the way to Australia I am always taken aback when I receive a note from someone so far away from where we live in Connecticut USA.

Indeed Our Lady and Our Lord have a way of making the world feel very small.

Today an email comes with pictures of the rosaries that have been made and the little man behind much of the work. The rosaries were sent out today to the Children's Rosary. It is a beautiful thought to contemplate a child somewhere in the world meeting in a Children's Rosary prayer group holding a Rosary that was made on the other side of the world. What connects these children is a love of Our Lord and a desire to be the moving hands of Our Lady and her Son. Whether making rosaries or using them to



pray we are helping to further the Kingdom of God right here, right now.

If you would like to help the Children's Rosary by making a donation to help our work this can be done online or donations can be mailed to us. These donations help to cover the expense of shipping materials and providing materials to Children's Rosary groups that cannot afford them around the world. Donations can be made out to Children's Rosary Inc. and mailed to:

Children's Rosary PO Box 271743 West Hartford, CT 06127 Donations can also be made online [Here](#).

Donations of used or new rosaries are always welcome and can be sent to the address above. We recommend one uses packaging that cushions the Rosaries when they are mailed to avoid damage. Thank you all so much. As a special thank you please know that all our Children's Rosary groups pray for those who help the Children's Rosary in any way. We also have a monthly Mass offered for members of the Children's Rosary and those that help the Children's Rosary on the 25th of the month.. Thank you all and God Bless!

This contribution is available at <http://childrensrosary.blogspot.com/2015/01/little-ones-helping-others-from-around.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Patron Saint of the Klingon Empire [at Washed, Sanctified and Justified]

Klingons are interesting characters. Some embody all the best traits of King Arthur's Knights or



Japanese Samurai while others are hard drinking, carousing, trouble makers best fit for an outlaw biker gang.

Individual and family honor is a hallmark of a true Klingon. A Klingon becomes a warrior by completing the arduous and painful Rite of Ascension. The warrior lives their life seeking battles to fight, enemies to defeat and ultimately to Die Well and enter into Stovokor. Their motto for life is ***Today is a Good Day to Die.***

Saint Joseph is known as the Patron Saint of a Happy Death. Klingons it seems would be a fan.

Joseph's title as the Patron of a Happy Death has to do with the image of him dying while surrounded by Jesus and Mary. To leave this life and enter into the next with our Savior and His Mother next to us is certainly a first class way to go. But let's consider some other ideas about Joseph and a Happy Death.

Many of the saints have encouraged us to meditate regularly on our mortality. The point is not to be a downer but to ensure our readiness for that journey we all will take one day. Death may come as a *thief in the night* and woe to us if we are caught unprepared.

Klingons prepare to Die Well by constant training in the Martial Arts and living a virtuous life (according to their mores). Saint Thomas Aquinas teaches us that those whom God chooses for momentous works He gives grace sufficient to accomplish the task. Joseph's job description was short but impressive, Be the Earthly father of the Son of God and the husband of His Mother. No other human being (besides Mary) comes close to this calling.

All humans are weighed down by the stain of original sin. But some theologians postulate that some people were freed from its effects before birth so they could better carry out the calling God gave them. It is dogma that Mary never suffered the effects. Saint Thomas Aquinas and Saint Bernadine hold that both Jeremiah and John the Baptist were sanctified and freed from original sin before their birth. Joseph's calling was greater than either of these two. In the opinion of Aquinas and others, Joseph needed a grace exceeding that of Jeremiah or John. In their opinion, immediately after his conception, Joseph was freed from original sin's burden.

This does not mean that he was free from temptation but rather that his spirit was so finely attuned to

God's will that he was able to choose the right path despite the hardships. Recall his momentary thought of divorcing Mary when he discovers she is pregnant or the thoughts he must have considered as he led Mary and Jesus through a bandit infested desert. He readily risked his life to save the life of a child he knew was not his biological son.

Joseph was prepared to risk his life, to die if necessary, to save the lives of Jesus and Mary. He also sacrificed daily to support them doing exhausting physical labor as a Tekton.



Joseph's life is indeed a model for a true Klingon, a life of self-sacrifice, of facing danger, of total consecration to a higher good. His unwavering yes to the mission God gave him, ensured that he was prepared to meet death no matter how or when it came.

For Joseph, today would be ***A Good Day To Die!***

This contribution is available at <http://warriorworlddad.com/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Faint Hue of Grace [at Faint Hue of Grace]

I hear you, hard-hitting Mass readings.

Sometimes, I have a difficult time gleaning personal lessons from Scripture. Sometimes the readings at Mass seem so far out of reach, unlearnable by my narrow-minded brain. But today wasn't one of those days.

"Allison, would you read at Mass today? We don't have anyone else."

It's one of my favorite questions. I've been reading at Mass since I was 7, and I love it. But usually at school, I don't have the opportunity. So today, I jumped on it.

"Ha," God must have thought. "I'll get her one way or another."

And He did.

Of course it's from John. Of course it's the "God is Love" passage. Of course the Gospel is the Walking on the Water.

I get it, God. I'm supposed to listen.



There is no fear in love...

But Lord, I have so much fear. Fear of the unknown, of being wrong, of authenticity, of eternity, of *love*. You know, oh Lord.

...but perfect love drives out fear..

The catch-22 of being afraid of love is that only love itself removes the fear. It takes a risk, like calling out to a ghost on the water. It takes a step of courage, a leap of faith. Faith in the unknown, trusting that something or *someone* will be there.

...and so the one who fears is not yet perfect in love.

You of all people, Lord, know that my love isn't perfect. I fall so short in so many areas. Because loving is difficult. Loving others, loving God, loving myself, loving my work: it's all a struggle at times. Which makes the act of reaching out to my Savior all the more important.

He saw that they were tossed about ... they had all seen him and were terrified.

Because who wouldn't be afraid of Love Himself approaching? Those who know not the Lover fear the love He gives. So why would they invite Him into their craft?

Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!

And He reached out His hand, and as they accepted Him into their small, rocking boat, He drew them to Himself. It's a giving-and-receiving, this Love.

They had not understood ... their hearts were hardened.



TAKE COURAGE

Today, when I reached out my hand for the chalice, I reached out my hand from my creaking boat. And He took my offered hand, and lowered Himself onto the seat beside me. And I prayed, *Lord, I'm afraid I don't know how to love You very well.*

And He replied, *Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid.*

This contribution is available at <http://fainthueofgrace.weebly.com/thoughts-and-ramblings/take-courage-it-is-i>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The acknowledged differences of Mormonism [at Catholic Deacon]

As someone who grew up as a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (i.e., Mormon) and who, as a young adult, converted and became Catholic, I try not make this on-line endeavor a Mormon apologetics forum. In truth, there are enough of those, even good ones, who do an effective job. However, as a former Mormon who still lives in Utah and who keeps his finger on the pulse of contemporary Mormonism, I think (hope) it's valuable from time-to-time to offer my unique perspective on matters concerning Mormonism.

Until Gordon B. Hinckley became president of the Mormon church in 1995, Mormons focused almost exclusively on what makes them different, unique, and preferable to what we might call historic Christianity in any and all of its forms (i.e., Catholicism, Orthodoxy, or all strands and strains of Protestantism). At root, this focus revolves around some very foundational Mormon claims, particularly what they call "The Great Apostasy." According to Mormons, sometime shortly after the end of the apostolic age, the Church founded by Christ and His apostles deviated from true Christianity. These deviations, over time, continued to grow deeper and deeper, as well as to multiply in number.

Of course the Mormon belief in The Great Apostasy presumes almost utter ignorance of the early Church Fathers, especially the so-called Apostolic Fathers, men such as Polycarp of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch, Clement of Rome, Papias of Hieropolis, not to mention documents like the

Didaché

and the

Shepherd of Hermas

, as well as Ireneaus of Lyons, Justin Martyr, etc. It also requires a fairly superficial reading of several of St Paul's letters. While, according to this view, there were attempts here and there, such as the Protestant reformation, to restore authentic Christianity, the true Church established by Christ and the Apostles was absent from the earth.

From the Mormon perspective it was Joseph Smith Jr. who restored the true Church after it having been absent from the earth for the vast majority of time between Christ's coming and the nineteenth century. For the past twenty years, however, Mormons have focused more on insisting that they are Christians, like Catholics, Orthodox, Lutherans, Anglicans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists, etc. So it is refreshing these days when someone in leadership in the Mormon Church, someone who is what they call a "General Authority" (i.e, a member of the First Presidency, Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, First and Second Quorums of the Seventy, or the Presiding Bishopric) sets about to tell the truth about Mormon distinctiveness

vis-à-vis

historic Christianity. So I appreciated very much reading a brief

[article](#)

in the Mormon Church-owned

[Deseret News](#)

about a presentation given earlier this month by Bishop Gérald Caussé, who serves as Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric, to new Mormon mission presidents and visitor center directors.



Temple Square statue of Joseph Smith, Jr. and Oliver Cowdrey receiving the Melchizedek priesthood from Peter, James, and John, who they claimed appeared to them as resurrected beings

The bottom-line-up-front comes from the end of the article: "Investigators [those considering becoming Mormons and being taught by proselytizing missionaries] must understand that a universal apostasy occurred after the deaths of Christ and His apostles; otherwise, there would have been no need for a Restoration." This dovetails nicely with the beginning of the article, which cites Caussé as insisting that "The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not just another Christian Church, but rather it has unique elements that are essential to the salvation of mankind." In between Caussé is reported as teaching that there are "three essential truths conveyed in three major events associated with the Restoration." First, "the vision of the Father and the Son experienced by the Prophet Joseph Smith in the spring of 1820" (see

["Latter-day quandry and resolution"](#)

). Second, "the translation of the Book of Mormon." Third, "the restoration of priesthood keys and ordinances by heavenly messengers."

I don't post this to be contentious or even really to argue, but simply to demonstrate, prior to any subsequent discussion, the objective differences between Mormonism and Christianity as handed on and practiced throughout its history. I think it's terribly important to be honest and forthright about our objective differences. Such honesty is the only way to have meaningful interaction. There certainly are points of contention and disagreement among Christians. But when compared to our collective differences with Mormonism, these differences (i.e., the nature and structure of the Church, authority of the Church, sources of revelation- Scripture only, or Scripture

and

Tradition?- sacraments, justification, the relationship between faith and works, etc.) are quite narrow.

Among Christians Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant there is no dispute about the triune nature of God, who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or that the Holy Bible is what constitutes Scripture (even if some accept the Deutero-canonical books as inspired and some do not), or even that the Church of Christ was given irrevocable authority ("the gates of the netherworld [/hell] shall not prevail against it"

[Matthew 16:18](#)

) to act in the name of Christ, especially as it pertains to baptism, the Lord's supper, and handing on the truth of the Gospel and has existed on the earth since its establishment.

Once again it bears noting that the question, "Are Mormons Christians" is the reddest of herrings. By their own account, Mormons are the

only

true Christians. This is borne out by the fact that

everyone

who becomes Mormon

must

be baptized, even if they were previously baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit," even if s/he was baptized by immersion after having reached the age of reason. Besides in the official account of Joseph Smith Jr's "First Vision," in which God the Father appeared to him in bodily form, thus revealing that even God the Father "has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's" (

[Doctrine & Covenants 130:22](#)

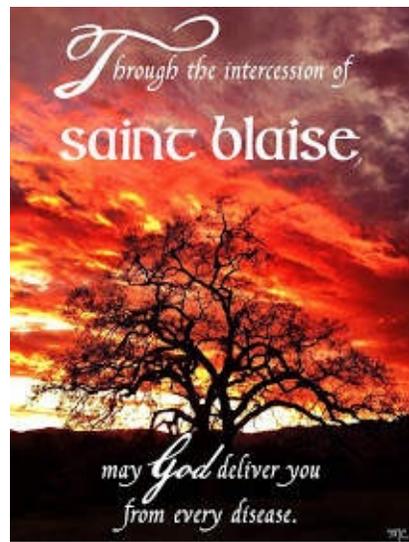
), the Father says these words to Smith in answer to Smith's question about which church he should join: "I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the Personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors were all corrupt; that: 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof'" (

[Joseph Smith History v 19](#)

).

This contribution is available at <http://scottdodge.blogspot.com/2015/01/the-acknowledged-differences-of.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Blaise's Melody [at Conceiving Hope]



Happy Feast of St. Blaise. Time to break out those blessed beeswax candles already!

He's one of the saints that is near and dear to me for many reasons, most of which I appreciated before marriage...but certainly became sweeter after marriage. It's funny how some saints are for certain seasons and others kind of stick with you, isn't it?

Blaise

is one that sticks.

Recently I've been writing posts as a way to learn how to articulate my thoughts better, not necessarily to share personal details about myself. I struggle with writing. And yet so many people that I love do not. The words flow from them seemingly effortlessly, filling page after page. And yet I stare at a blank page and wonder what I have to offer the next word I might write or type.

All that is to say that I think you

can

write without calling yourself a

writer

. That's where I am: a person who writes, but does not deserve to be considered a writer. My DH is a writer - through and through. He has that gift where words leak out of his pen and onto the page. And when he moves to the computer, the words leak out of his fingers and assemble themselves into keystrokes. It's kind of awesome to see how prolific some people are with their writing. They just seem to effortlessly tell stories, don't they?

People can tell stories without

being

writers though. It's kind of the fabric that knits together a culture. Kind of. That's like calling sushi kind of about seaweed, fish, and rice. But I digress. I'm really good at that. Most women are. We're

[spaghetti](#)

, after all (and men are

[waffles](#)

). Somewhere my DH is rubbing his stomach saying "mmmm... waffffllleesss" a little too much like Homer Simpson...

Storytelling. That's what we were talking about. Some people tell them with their writing. But that's not the only kind of storyteller that exists. It's not even the most compelling kind (though it can be!). For most of my life, I've been a storyteller. And music has been the book and the pen has been my voice. And the words are sung in soprano. Music has stirred me from the moment I knew how to recognize it. Anyone who knew me as a child would tell you that I was born with music in my soul. Not the kind of profound kind of soul-lifting music that

,

,

,

, or

might have been born with... but music all the same.

Here are [five tidbits](#) about my life and why I always needed St. Blaise:



1. Music

There is no way to tell the story of my life or my experiences without music. And there is a deep joy inside that tugs at me when I type that sentence. I like being so entangled with something that I might not be recognizable without it.

Isn't that an awesome metaphor for marriage too?

And because of that entanglement and the closeness that I have always felt to music, and music to me, I know that understanding God and my relationship with Him was easier. I'm not saying there is music between me and God (though maybe there is...that's kind of a beautiful thought on its own!)...so much as

I'm saying that nothing else in life seems to be entangled as closely as that. Learning that relationship showed me where God was supposed to be - where He **is**.

Especially because I was born mostly deaf.

2. Toddler Memories *Now I'm going to tell you a story with words. Or try. You'll understand why Blaise is so important to me as an intercessor after you read this. I hope!*

When I was a baby, I apparently excelled at most of the benchmarks for development, growth, and learning. I was running at seven months. Drawing and painting shortly after that. Tying shoes by age three. By all accounts, I'm sure my parents felt immense pride at all of that. I struggled to communicate with them, but I was constantly making noise. Humming, mostly. And like any toddler, I didn't listen well. These aren't anecdotes I learned from my parents - I vividly remember living these moments of my life as they happened well over thirty years ago.

*It never struck me that remembering toddler-hood was an accomplishment in and of itself, but I mention it since some people **do** think it's odd to have vivid memories from that young of an age.*

As time passed, I became more of a sullen child because of the communication gap, though I still made plenty of noise. I had my own personal soundtrack of melodies and that seemed to grow for all the conversation I didn't have or understand. My parents tried to placate me however they could. Once, that involved being given an orange lollipop as a two and a half year old. I got to pick out the color I wanted at the bank that day. My father opened the lollipop and put it in my eager hands. I have no idea what he said to me, but I remember his lips moving. I also remember standing at the top of the stairs when the lolly suddenly slipped off its stick. With one panicked in-breath, it quickly lodged itself solidly in my wind pipe. I can only imagine how terrifying that moment was for my father, watching his toddling daughter choking at the top of the staircase.

Lord have mercy.

I very clearly remember the feeling of choking and the panic I felt as my field of vision turned white and sparkly. Thankfully, my quick-acting father was able to get that lolly out of my throat with one swift move and my life continued. Pretty good reason to have a devotion to St. Blaise as an intercessor, no?

We know so little of him, but

S

t. Blaise was purported to be a physician who saved a young child from something caught in their throat...

My parents scrambled to figure out why I slowly and progressively lost my spark after that though.

How could she be so ahead and then suddenly have everything fall flat? Was it the trauma of her choking? It seemed more than just a "season" or a developmental plateau.

In their desperation to return my smiles to my face and engage me more, they even got me a kitten soon after my brush with death. A white one with blue eyes (oh the irony that she had no hearing problems as most white haired, blue eyed cats do...). I adored her. And the dialogue got a little better. At least, I found

myself wanting to express new things. I still remember a morning we were talking about my kitten in the living room. My parents were asking me all kinds of questions about her. "What does she do when she's upset?" and "What sound does she make when she's happy?" and all the other things parents ask their children to identify and associate with their pet...

But I had no idea what sound a cat makes, let alone when it's happy or upset.

I just stared at them like they were making fun of me. Cats don't smile, I thought to myself...how am I supposed to know if she's happy?

Yes, my three year old thoughts were quite emo, ha!

That was, of course, the moment when my parents realized something was wrong. Tests and doctors went on to show that I had been born with only about 20% hearing between both ears. No wonder I had no idea what sound a cat makes when it's happy! After many surgeries and hospitals and doctors appointments, things seemed to be improved. My speech was improving, but I wasn't able to be easily understood yet and I definitely had trouble hearing conversations directed at me. It took a lot of intensive speech therapy to get there. Things like S's and Z's really are subtleties that are lost on a child who can't hear them. With hard work though, I conquered the challenges in front of me. Eventually, the doctor appointments lessened. It was simply time to see if the surgeries had improved things. We retested my hearing.

I remember sitting in the pediatrician's office the morning we were supposed to get the results of the new hearing test, uncomfortably perched on the crinkly paper pulled across the leather exam bed.

Sitting on paper makes me feel like I'm sick again, I thought.

Five year old me, philosophizing and making connections about what health meant. The doctor came into the room, and he looked at my chart and pushed papers over the top of his manila file folder. He nodded to himself and scratched his chin. He asked my parents to speak with him in the hallway and exited and closed the door behind them.

Great, they aren't going to tell me what's going on now, I fumed.

I stared at the floor. Sitting there on paper, in my tee-shirt and underwear, with my pigtails hanging in front of my face and my legs nervously scissor-dancing as they hung over the side of the table. And then I heard the pediatrician say - as loud as if he was standing next to me and saying it full volume in my ear - "she'll never be a musician, but with more speech therapy we can hopefully get her to be able to communicate better with her peers". Not another thing was heard of that conversation they all had in the hallway. Minutes later (an eternity to a five year old), they all returned to the room. I supposed they had developed some kind of game plan to articulate the results to me or share the follow-up details in a kid-friendly way. Instead, they just said I could put my clothes back on and that we were leaving. When we got in the car to drive home, I broke the silence and asked why I couldn't be a musician. My parents stared at each other blankly.

"Who told you that?", they asked me.

"The doctor said it", I replied matter-of-factly.

"When did he say that to you?", they asked - more alarmed now. "

He didn't say it to me - he said it to you", I told them incredulously.

The rest of the car trip home was spent with them talking about how I could have possibly heard the musician comment while the radio blasted

Girls Just Want to Have Fun... **3. Callings and Blessings**

That was the first time I began to recognize God's call in my life. It wasn't that I understood the enormity of having heard something out of my range of hearing - or that I understood this was the voice of God. Everyone swore I couldn't have heard anything they said in that doctor's office because they had walked all the way back to the waiting room to discuss the test results and next steps. And yet I still heard clear-as-day

"She'll never be a musician..."

It wasn't profound to a child, it was just kind of a challenge.

I studied music voraciously from then on. All years of school, college, and then I began performing and singing professionally. Hundreds and hundreds of weddings. Performances with the Moscow Ballet. With the Georgetown Orchestra. At the Kennedy Center. The Lyric Opera House. Never telling a soul I had a hearing problem, for fear they would discount my voice. I have sung in amazing places with wonderful people. I have been very blessed to do so. God gave me a voice to tell His story and it is His gift I share with people...not my own.

4. Feeling of Sound

So what does that all have to do with Blaise? Why did I even bring the dude up 80,000 words ago? Part of learning how to sing when you have a hearing impediment involves muscle memory more than it might for another singer. It involves really understanding the teeny tiny minutiae of how a hum feels in your voicebox. Where a tone is by how it feels. It's learning how singing

feels

instead of purely how it sounds. I've had many musicians tell me that the great teachers around the world use this method to get singers in tune with their own vocal frequencies better - to produce purer tones that are the result of better breathing control. And yet that was just the way I had to learn because of my limitation. I learned to sing the same way I learned what sound a cat makes when it is happy... by feeling the vibration.

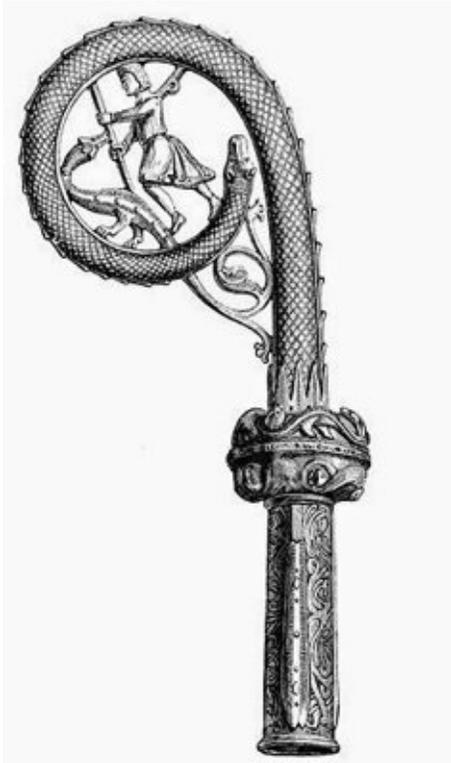
So you can imagine how amazingly important my throat has been to me in this journey, right? Blaise (*yes, we're on a first name basis at this point...*

) is my go-to intercessor for throat maladies. And because I didn't die from choking. And though I've thankfully had very few situations that could have led to choking in the more than thirty years since, I've

had plenty of throat maladies! Goodness, there are whole years in my life that were lost to strep throat infections, screaming through painful ear drops after corrective surgeries, painful exams at ENT offices because of Eustachian tube dysfunction, back-up, or pain.

I've always needed a St. Blaise.

What I didn't realize in my single years was how uniquely Blaise's patronage would also fit into my marriage. This saint isn't *just* for throat ailments...he's a patron for all illness. Even infertility. And without marriage, I might not have known I needed a St. Blaise's intercession for that.



5. Wool and Biscuits

The cultural connection is there too. Blaise is a patron of Sicily (my father's side of the family is Sicilian) and known to the Italians as

San Biagio

. But he is also the patron of woolmakers and shepherds.

You can't get more Irish than wool!

My DH is 100% Irish - and the remaining heritage running through my veins is also Irish. Italians celebrate the feast with panettone or little tea cakes (

sounds Irish as well)

. There is even a tradition that holds that cookies are made into the shape of a bishop's crozier. Men would give the question-mark-shaped cookies to their sweethearts and if she broke it in half, keeping half for herself and returning the other half to the man, it meant she would marry him.

I think of all the biscuits and cakes DH and I have shared when I ponder that tradition. I'm a sharer - in

that I want half of whatever he is eating, lol. I love that a tradition that rests solidly between the two cultures we share, celebrating a saint I look to for prayer in so many ways, is a constant reminder of the bond we've found with each other.

Physician and hero to children. And a solid reminder

to me

of how closely entangled we should be with God. Blaise reminds me that God should be as close as

the feeling of a hum in your throat

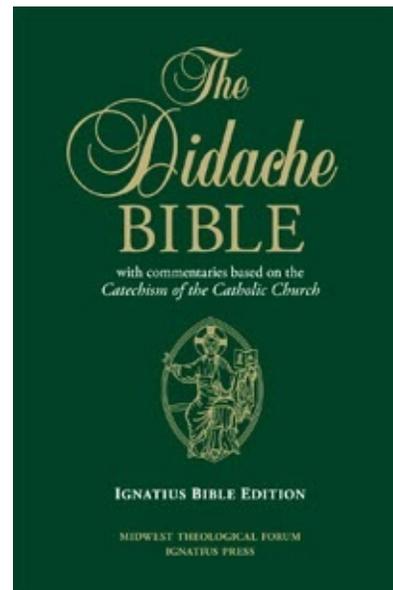
. I hope you will make time to have your throat blessed today. Think of St. Blaise and the awesome example he set. Let the symbols (the beeswax candles) of the Presentation of Our Lord that were blessed yesterday rest at your throat and ask St. Blaise's intercession for God to deliver you from all illness and affliction... including infertility. That's what I'll be doing today, as well as offering my yearly prayer of thanksgiving for the illnesses that have been taken from me.

"Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop and martyr, may God deliver you from every disease of the throat and from every other illness: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

This contribution is available at <http://conceivinghope.blogspot.com/2015/02/blaises-melody.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Review of The Didache Bible: Ignatius Bible Edition [at Catholic Bibles]



Of all the "upcoming" Bibles that my readers have been waiting for over the past year,

[*The Didache Bible: Ignatius Bible Edition*](#)

ranks as likely one of the highest in anticipation. Of course, as often happens with such eager expectations, one may feel let down when the final product is finally in their hands. Sometimes, particularly in the area of quality Catholic Bibles, anticipation often is greater than the delivery. Fortunately, this is not the case with

The Didache Bible

. In almost every way, this Bible delivers on what it was promised to be. Those who have wished for a Bible that incorporated the

Catechism of the Catholic Church

in a comprehensive, yet readable way with the inclusion of useful study aids will be utterly satisfied.

Those who have wanted commentary and annotations for a full one-volume edition of the RSV-2CE, they need not wait any longer.

The Didache Bible

is a great achievement and many will be thanking Midwest Theological Forum (MTF) and Ignatius Press for a long time.

One aspect of reviewing Bibles that has become more important for me over the years is page presentation and layout. Content is, of course, important, but if I am not led or drawn into the text, it will ultimately serve no real purpose.

The Didache Bible

excels in how the Biblical text, cross-references, and annotations are presented on the page. I don't think the RSV-2CE has ever looked so good. The white page against the dark black type really makes the text pop. Between the scriptural text and the commentary is placed the cross-references, which are bracketed off with a thin red line. This serves as an aesthetically beautiful break between the two. It is subtle, but I think it really works, much like the use of red in the

[HarperOne NABRE](#)

. The commentary, which in the New Testament is quite extensive, is only slightly smaller in size than the scriptural text. The paper does not lend itself to ghosting, although it is by no means opaque. If you have ever owned a prayer book or missal from MTF you will notice a similarity in this regard. One last point that I wanted to highlight about this edition is its size. I don't know why, but I was expecting it to be much bigger. However, it is remarkably compact for a study Bible. Its size reminds me of the NOAB RSV published back in the late 70's and still available today. What this means is that not only do you have a fine study Bible, but also one that you could take with you pretty much everywhere. All in all, this is a beautiful Bible to read. I think its size and page layout are the real highlights of this Bible.

The edition I am reviewing is the hardcover one. The bonded leather edition is due out later this year, although I think this Bible deserves to be bound in a nicer genuine or goatskin cover. However, I will be sure to let you know when I receive confirmation on a date for the bonded leather one. The hardcover edition is quite sturdy and opens up flat from the first day. It came with two bible ribbons, which is a nice touch. This bible was advertised as having a sewn binding, which I still believe it has. However, they have enhanced the binding with some glue, which at a few spots is clearly noticeable. I would like to hear back from some of my readers as to what they think about this. This edition was printed in India.

Now, as for the content found in this book. As mentioned earlier, the translation is the RSV-2CE. I am not going to spend any time discussing translations, which we do here so often anyways. However, since I am a theology teacher who uses MTF's

Didache Semester Series

in my classroom, I will say that this serves as a perfect compliment to that classroom text which utilizes the RSV and NRSV in the textbooks.

The introductory material includes a foreword from emeritus Cardinal-Archbishop of Chicago Francis George, followed by an introduction by Fr. James Socias. What follows are a couple of short essays by the editors explaining how Catholics read the Bible. Here you find reference to

Dei Verbum

and those early paragraphs of the

CCC

which discuss the literal and spiritual reading of the Bible. Following that, there is a "Brief Summary of Sacred Scripture" which gives a very short overview of the main theme(s) of each Biblical book. The

introductory material concludes with a chronology of Old Testament and New Testament events and a list of passages of scripture for personal meditation, including the parables and miracles of Christ. These opening aids are more geared toward the beginner, but can be consulted by a seasoned Bible reader. I could see them being extremely helpful to someone in RCIA.

Looking at the commentary based off the

CCC

, you will immediately notice that a lot of work has been put into adapting the

CCC

to work in this format. For the most part, there are not direct quotations found in the annotations. To be sure, there are indeed some, but most have been re-worded in order to make them applicable to a particular biblical passage. Each of them, however, contains a direct reference to the

CCC

paragraph that has been re-worded. And there are plenty of these

CCC

cross-references! I should say that you often don't realize that it has been edited, since what you read sounds like it is coming directly from the

CCC

. I would imagine that this took the bulk of the editors time. Some of the pages, primarily in the New Testament, you will find that the

CCC-

based commentary takes up over half the page. While most of the pages are concerned with referencing the

CCC

, there are numerous annotations that point the reader to connections with the Liturgy, occasional quotes from recent Popes and the Church Fathers, analysis of lexical issues, and allegorical interpretations of OT passages. I found the liturgical connections to be very helpful and insightful. For example, there is a note in Daniel 6:10 which connects Daniel praying three times a day to a passage in the

General Instruction of the Liturgy of the Hours.

There will be much to consider and pray about for years in these commentaries. As you might guess, there is more commentary, per page, in the NT than in the OT. Certain places, like in portions of the historical, wisdom, and prophetic books, have less than a quarter of a page of commentary on them. Judith would be a perfect example. Let me also say that if you are looking for commentary that is more

historical in nature, as found in more academic study Bibles, the

Didache Bible

is not for you. One last study help, in regards to the commentary, that the editors of

The Didache Bible

included are these occasional red in-text boxes which are found at the bottom of certain pages. For example, there are two of these found in Genesis 3, where they explain the "Rebellion of Satan and His Angels" and "Sin, Suffering, and Death." These are not found on every page, but do pop-up and provide some helpful insights which are always references to, you guessed it, the

CCC

I should also note that each biblical book comes with an introduction, which looks at authorship, dating, audience, and main themes. I would call the content of each generally conservative, but not without acknowledging difficult issues relating to authorship and dating. You see this most notably in the intros to the books of the Pentateuch. Overall, I think it strikes a good balance. They are not as extensive as found in the

Ignatius Catholic Study Bible

or those in the most of the entries in the

NABRE

There are also over 100 apologetical explanation pages that are scattered, without any real order, throughout the Bible. I breathed a big sigh of relief when I found out that they were not printed on glossy paper, but instead the same paper that the other pages are printed on. While I think a Bible like the

New Catholic Answers Bible

is great, all those glossy pages make it difficult for the Bible to open flat. These apologetics pages are comprehensive, yet not overwhelming. They provide ton of scriptural cross-references, as well a referring to the

CCC

. The issues range from the importance of the Protoevangelium to the Rosary. In the end, this make this Bible not only the best

CCC-

based Bible on the market, but also the best apologetics one. (The info in the index also assists those

engaged in apologetics.)

Looking at the study aids in the back of the Bible, I think the maps provided may be the best in any Catholic edition I have ever seen. There are a total of 27 unique maps that are both colorful and full of great information. These maps cover everything from Abraham's migration to 7 Churches of Revelation, including the period of the Maccabees. Most helpful are the numerous maps showing the journeys during the patriarchal period of Genesis. They are printed on glossary paper, and the only curious thing about the set of maps, is that they are placed immediately after Revelation, but before the rest of the material in the appendix which is printed on regular paper. I wonder why the glossy maps weren't just placed at the end of the Bible? Whatever the case, following the maps section is a helpful 43-page glossary of names, places, and terms. Each entry contains about a sentence or two of information, including scriptural references. There are then indexes to the apologetics materials, which are scattered throughout the

Didache Bible

. At the very back is a 20-page subject index, including biblical names, which includes a ton of scriptural references and cross-references. One noticeable omission would be a table of Sunday and Feast Day readings from the Lectionary.

Again, this is a wonderful resource in a truly compact size. As I mentioned above, there will be many people who are going to be excited to get their hands on this. In particular, if you are interested in apologetics and studying the three-fold spiritual sense of Scripture, as outlined in

Dei Verbum

and the

CCC,

you will have a lot to love in the content of this Bible. I have included some photos of this Bible on a [previous post](#)

. You can also go to

[MTF](#)

for a sneak peak.

I would like to thank Ignatius Press for providing a review copy. There was no pressure in me providing a positive review of this Bible.

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicbiblesblog.com/2015/01/review-of-didache-bible-ignatius-bible.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Writing Round-up [at Kitchen table chats]



Once again I find my words showing up more at other venues than here. You might enjoy these articles.

At Zenit.org I

[address the issue of religious liberty and healthcare workers](#)

. Read the whole article at the link but here is a snippet:

Every profession is vulnerable to this religious discrimination, but perhaps none more so than the medical profession. Health care workers are intimately involved with matters of life and death on a daily basis. Catholic teaching, in accord with natural law, professes that all human life has intrinsic dignity from the moment of conception to the moment of natural death and faithful Catholics seek to uphold this dignity in every aspect of their lives, including their professional activities. Catholic health care workers are increasingly challenged by a secular health care system that offers little or no protection for the unborn, the disabled, and the elderly, and has little regard for religious principles.

Writing at the HLI Truth & Charity Forum I talk about how

[the times of Downton Abbey prompted Pope Pius XI to write *Casti Connubii*.](#)

A preview:

As I watch this story unfold and with the benefit of knowing what ensues in the next ninety years, I find myself wanting to grab Lady Mary by the shoulders and scream, “Please, no! You are on the road to heartache. Abandoning chastity will not strengthen your eventual marriage. Contraception and eugenics advocate Marie Stopes is a false prophet!” Unfortunately, I cannot change history.

Please head over to the HLI Truth & Charity Forum to read the whole thing.

Finally, at CatholicStand.com

[I weigh in on the Pope's remarks about large families made during his flight from Manila to Rome](#)

. They are not as radical as hyperventilating pundits declare:

Much of this angst could be alleviated if everyone remembers that Catholic doctrine and teaching do not turn on a single utterance of the Pope. This interview is not an encyclical, an apostolic letter, or even a formal address. It is a conversation. One must look at the entire context.

Thank you for all you support and I would love to know what you think about any of these issues.

This contribution is available at <http://catholic-mom.blogspot.com/2015/01/writing-round-up.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

What Do You Do When You Can't Sing Anymore? [at The Beautiful Music Challenge]



About a year ago I had a surgery that changed my life.

I had been diagnosed with thyroid cancer, had to have my neck cut open and my enormous, cancerous thyroid removed. The chances that my throat and vocal production apparatus would be damaged in the process was low, but I worried anyway. I made my living with my voice.

At my follow-up appointment, the ENT surgeon couldn't see any damage to my vocal cords or larynx. He told me everything looked good, and (though my thyroid was the largest thyroid he had ever removed) the cancer was small, encapsulated and contained. He was confident they had gotten it all with the removal of my thyroid. I had a clean bill of health.

"Everything looks good! You should be back singing in no time." He smiled. Another successful surgery.

"What do you mean by 'no time'" I asked, suspiciously. At six weeks post-op, I still couldn't make my voice produce differing pitches. I could hear them in my head, I would open my mouth to sing along and all the notes came out very much like Johnny-One-Note.

"About six months, tops. It's all in the swelling at this point. Once the swelling recedes, you'll be fine, but if you have any trouble, come back."

I haven't been back, but I still can't sing. Well, I can sing alto, softly, and only some of it. I can sing some hymns at Mass, but not many of them. I can sing some of the chants, provided the musicians don't begin them too high. With the very top of my range resting somewhere around A above middle C, the reality is that, after singing for as long as I can remember, I am sitting in the back pews of the church with the non-singers.

Music has been the means by which I process emotions. Music has been the way that I pray. Music has

been a gift that I have shared with others, hoping to lead them to a deeper relationship with God, and, in the process, enriching my own relationship with Him. To paraphrase Cardinal Ratzinger, music is an expression of overflowing of joy. Now it's gone and I am heartbroken.

Music is as much a part of my spiritual life as the Mass. In many respects, music is what has always led me back to the Mass and back into the arms of my loving Father when I have drifted into dark places in my life. Sometimes, I go to the church and just sit in the silence until a song presents itself and then I sing. It is my path to God and without it I am afraid that I have become very lost.

Reflecting on this brings to mind a conversation I had

[in the combox](#)

several months ago about active participation. And I noted in

[another post](#)

that, in the United States, participation had been co-opted to mean "if you're not singing then you're not participating." I made the assertion that there are other ways to participate in the Mass and that singing was not strictly necessary. Several people disagreed. Right now, I am getting a very eye-opening crash-course in what that looks like from the pew.

I still believe that there are other ways to actively participate in the Mass, but in some parishes, the move to singing the Propers has left the congregation out completely. Either the music director doesn't believe that the congregation can or will pick up the Propers and sing them, or they believe that it's not necessary for them to do so. Either way, the congregation is left to sit and let the Mass wash over them, appreciating the skill of the choir, but not physically engaging with the texts being presented in the Propers.

This is the antithesis of the "full-on active participation" envisioned by the liturgical reformers of the 70's and 80's - a movement that left no room to breathe, think or reflect because there was perpetual sound and physical engagement. However, it's just as damaging as performance-based music, be it praise and worship or operatic art masses, that leave the congregation with the impression that all they have to do is show up to be inspired.

There must be a mid-point that we can find and my sense is that the mid-point is going to be different for every parish. Every parish has a personality. Some congregations will need more opportunities to contribute their voices, some will not require as many. As Aristotle teaches that virtue is the mid-point between excess and deficiency. That mid-point, however, isn't a mathematical mean or average - it's a sliding scale. Sometimes virtue is closer to excess than deficiency. Take Courage (the mid-point between Cowardice and Rashness): Courage is likely closer to Rashness than Cowardice.

Perhaps, then, Participation is a mid-point between silence and noise. Where we draw that line, though, takes some practice, experience and some growth. It won't be the same point for every parish.

How do we find that mid-point in our own parishes?

How do we find that mid-point for ourselves and, when that mid-point has to change, how should we handle it?

I haven't come up with all the answers; maybe you have. Please share your insights in the combox.

This contribution is available at <http://beautifulmusicchallenge.blogspot.com/2015/01/participation-revisited-what-do-you-do.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

A death in Plan Grande [at Hermano Juancito]

Last night I woke up at 4 am and heard some people talking nearby. I had no idea what was happening and so went back to sleep. I had planned on sleeping in.

I got up at about 6:30 am and noticed a group of men gathered at the corner near the school. I saw Juan, a neighbor who lives below my house, and asked him what had happened. He told me to come.

I went and found out that his mother had died last night and that they had an all night vigil in the main room of his house – as is the custom here.

Gloria had not seen lights on in my house and had decided not to call me, thinking I was tired. I was – but that wouldn't have stopped me from stopping by for at least an hour. I told her to contact me whenever there is a death.

I prayed a bit at the coffin and spoke briefly with some family members.

Padre German came out for Mass about noon.

The Mass was in the old church, which is now used for meetings. The new church is being repainted (for the February 3 feast day) and so they couldn't use it.

Mass was moving. Padre German gave a very pointed homily. One point he stressed, probably noting the profound grief of some family members, was the importance of asking for help. He mentioned that Doña Victoria won't get to the cemetery by herself; four men will carry her coffin.

There was much more that he shared, including words of hope based on our need to rely on the Lord.

But one of the most moving moments happened during the Greeting of Peace.

The widower is a bent-over man in his eighties; I don't think he hears very well; I also thought that he was very withdrawn.

But he left his place and began to greet others. Then he stood by the casket.

Here the caskets usually have a window where one can see the face of the departed.

He stood there and gazed at his beloved.

As Padre was about to begin the rites at the coffin, he invited the widower forward and noted the beauty of the old man's gesture.



I was near tears – such deep love.



The Mass ended and many went, walking or in pick ups to the funeral. I decided not to go – partly because I’ve got a little cold, partly because I need some personal space.

But as I walked by the new church toward my house in the rain, I noticed the small area of light in the distance.



Creation provided a sign of hope – reflecting the love of an old man for his wife.

This contribution is available at <http://hermanajuancito.blogspot.com/2015/01/a-death-in-plan-grande.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Why not "Spiritual Communion" for most at mega-Masses? [at Te Deum laudamus!]



And the priest said to the boy: *"Tarcisius, remember that a heavenly treasure has been entrusted to your weak hands. Avoid crowded streets and do not forget that holy things must never be thrown to dogs nor pearls to pigs. Will you guard the Sacred Mysteries faithfully and safely?"*. "I would die", Tarcisio answered with determination, *"rather than let go of them"*. ([Pope Benedict, re-telling the story of St. Tarcisius to 55,000 altar servers in Rome in August of 2010](#))

In the third century, St. Tarcisius - an acolyte of about 12, died a brutal death, by beating and stoning, protecting the Eucharist that hung in a small linen bag around his neck as he took Communion to prisoners. It was in the third century - a period of intense persecution of Christians and the pagan boys who beat him to death, his friends, discovered he was Christian.

Do we believe in Our Eucharistic Lord enough to die for Him like St. Tarcisius, rather than allow Him to fall into the wrong hands or to even be handled inappropriately by those whose intentions are more benign?

Even less, are we willing to abstain from Holy Communion, and make a spiritual communion, when the sheer number of people at a Mass increases the likelihood of accidents, irreverent handling out of ignorance, and intentional profanation? Abstaining in such a way would surely be painful, but it is not without graces, especially under such circumstances. St. Thomas Aquinas pointed out one benefit of abstention.

If someone knows from experience that daily Communion increases fervor without lessening reverence, then let him go every day. But if someone finds that reverence is lessened and devotion not much increased, then let him sometimes abstain, so as to draw near afterwards with better dispositions.

Even if we do have the fervor Aquinas speaks of, I wonder if he would think it reasonable for a one-time abstention at an event so extraordinary, it makes distribution of Holy Communion difficult without risks to the Sacred Species already mentioned?

There have been outcries over distribution of Communion since these large Masses began, but with regards to authentic dialogue with our hierarchy, it is largely an "un-discussible." At least, that is how I feel about it. Many acknowledge it's a problem, but nothing ever happens to mitigate it. There are no shortage of stories of people finding the Eucharist on the ground after Mass ends, or of sources trying to

sell the Consecrated Hosts online. "

["Black Masses" are cropping up with increasing frequency, and in public ways.](#)

Since it is a mockery of the Catholic Mass, it is not a "Black Mass" without the Body of Christ in the Host because they desecrate it as part of the ritual.



It's not just the Hosts we should be concerned with, but the fragments, each of which are no less the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ than the whole. The Church still requires Communion-plates but this is largely ignored (

[Redemptionis Sacramentum, 93](#)

). I've seen particles on the Communion-plates used during Masses at my own parish. Just think, most priests carefully sweep any remaining fragments from their own paten into the Chalice, and then drink what is left; yet, they don't use the plates when distributing. There are fragments of the Body of Christ all over our parish floors. How can we not expect that a lot of handling of the Sacred Species during large open air Masses won't do the same?

If you think this is trivial, read the saints on it. These teachings don't change because we are in the "modern world." They are timeless; it is we who need to change our thinking about Eucharistic reverence.

Here is St. Ephrem:

One particle from its crumbs is able to sanctify thousands and thousands, and is sufficient to afford life to those who eat of it.

And, St. Cyril of Jerusalem, after discussing just how delicately we would treat gold-dust:

How much more carefully, then, will you guard against losing as much as a crumb of that which is more precious than gold or precious stones?

A video US Bishops should study ahead of papal visit in 2015

What prompts my reflection is a situation you may already have learned about through other blogs or in social media. I wanted to pray and reflect on it before deciding to post on it. When Pope Francis was in the Philippines, someone recorded part of Holy Communion where a chaotic situation resulted in people passing along the Eucharist over the heads of other people who could not reach the priest distributing, sometimes seemingly in stacks. These are not bad people; they are badly informed people who are trying to be helpful without realizing the dangers of what they are doing with the Holy Eucharist. I think by-and-large, many would agree, that the Filipinos are among the most devout and faithful Catholics. So, this is not about them. It's a bigger issue that has been bubbling for decades.

We have time to act, here in the US, and find better ways to handle extremely large crowds with regards to Holy Communion.

Here is the video, originally provided in a Facebook post by 100% KATOLIKONG PINOY! It was then [subsequently uploaded by One Peter Five to YouTube](#)

There was also [an eye-witness account by a young Filipino blogger](#)

who was otherwise very enthusiastic by the visit of Pope Francis. He writes:

Some of the crowd — who were at least two meters away from the ministers — cried for Holy Communion. Two or three soon called out, “Pasa-pasa nalang! (Just pass Them [the Sacred Hosts] around!)”

At first the ministers did not hear them, or probably ignored it. But the people were beginning to be noisy. Some of crowd, fortunately, said, “Uy, hindi pwedeng pasa-pasa! Komunyon yan!”

But the ministers were rather oblivious to the “debate.” Soon they DID pass around — from one grubby hand to another — the Sacred Hosts to the people who were asking for Communion. I saw one broken Host being handed on. Did the minister break It, or was It broken as It was being passed around? Worse, even the ciborium containing the Hosts was soon passed around!

Too distressed to bear the sight, I looked away.....

Other reports I've read said Communion fell to the ground and was found in mud.

Can you imagine seeing the Infant Jesus laying in the mud?

That is not bread; it is Jesus. And how we treat the Eucharist is how we witness our belief in the Real

Presence to others. What kind of witness does this give to non-Catholics in attendance, and there always some.

Archbishop Villegas Responds

A major Filipino news outlet got a response from Archbishop Villegas on what is seen in the video. I'm going to

[quote from the *One Peter Five* post](#)

, which has a translation of what was partially in Tagalog. He addresses the criticism saying:

“Under normal circumstances, this should not have happened, but the situation in the Luneta was extraordinary, six million people.” He added: “On this occasion, it was necessary to help each other receive communion.”

We read further:

Fr. Francis Lucas, executive secretary of the CBCP Episcopal Commission on Social Communication and Mass Media, echoed this, telling GMA News Online: “For pastoral reasons since people can’t move during communion, mass passing of the host is okay.”

I'd like to know if the Congregation for Divine Worship would agree to these special "pastoral" situations and allow "mass passing of the Host" in large, papal Masses.

On what Archbishop Villegas said, as was pointed out at

One Peter Five

, we have to stop and reflect on the word, "necessary." We would infer from this that receiving Holy Communion

at all

in a gathering of six to seven million is necessary. Maybe that is what we need to discuss. Is it really necessary for

everyone

to receive Communion at an extraordinarily large gathering for Mass? We learn from the CCC:

1389: The Church obliges the faithful to take part in the Divine Liturgy on Sundays and feast days and, prepared by the sacrament of Reconciliation, **to receive the Eucharist at least once a year, if possible during the Easter season.** But the Church **strongly encourages** the faithful to receive the holy Eucharist on Sundays and feast days, or more often still, even daily.

At most we might be strongly encouraged to receive Holy Communion at a Papal Mass, if we were properly disposed, but it is not a requirement. I return back to my original question: Are we willing to protect the Body of Christ, unto forgoing Holy Communion, if it was the most practical way to prevent

what is seen in that video? Or worse, in the case of someone carrying It off for some other purpose?

Spiritual Communion

What is "spiritual communion?" Simply put, it is an interior movement in which we unite ourselves to the Eucharistic Lord when we are unable to receive. This is something that can be done at any time and any place, but can also be done during Mass when we cannot receive for one reason or another. Perhaps the Eucharistic fast isn't up, or you didn't make it to Confession and are aware of grave sin. You don't skip Mass; you hear the Word of God, and when others go to Holy Communion, you make a spiritual communion. There was an excellent article in the National Catholic Register back in 2011 called,

[Follow the Saints: Make a Spiritual Communion](#)

. Do read it to understand it better.

Spiritual communion is not the same as Holy Communion, but it can still bring us graces when circumstances do not allow us to receive Our Eucharistic Lord. I would think the graces would be in abundance if people accepted this on the basis that the risk was too great for accidents or profanation to distribute to such a large crowd.

Some have been outright opposed to any kind of large outdoor papal Masses. I don't think it's necessary to go that far. All we need to do is limit Communion to those seated in certain areas (and ensure people of all classes have access, not just big donors and dignitaries); and, ask the rest to make a spiritual communion for that day. If the Pope could hold Mass in a major Cathedral on a Sunday when traveling, and do any outdoor Masses on weekdays or Saturday mornings, it makes it all the more easier to ask people to make a spiritual communion since these Masses are not obligatory.

Offering up spiritual communion with the sacramentally famished



Until I read the book,

[Dominus Est It Is the Lord! Reflections of a Bishop of Central Asia on Holy Communion](#)

, I had not given much thought to the plight of persecuted Christians who sometimes go for weeks, months, and even many years or decades without seeing a priest or having access to the Sacraments. These are clandestine Catholics who risk life, liberty, and other things in order to continue practicing their faith

under ground as Catholics did in the days of St. Tarcisius. Bishop Athanasius Schneider, ORC, grew up in such a climate after his family was exiled to Kazakhstan from Germany. In the beginning of the book he explains how Catholics kept their faith during those long periods without a priest behind the Iron Curtain and the risks taken by priests and lay people alike. This was the case for about two decades after World War II. That gripped me at the beginning of his first book on the subject. In the image here, we see the final moments of Blessed Miguel Pro of Mexico before he was shot for just being a priest, serving Catholics practicing clandestinely. He is famous for shouting out before a hail of bullets hit him, "Viva Cristo Rey!" (Long Live Christ the King).

There are also people in prisons around the world without access to the sacraments, as well as in places like nursing homes. I saw first hand when my mother was in one of those places in rehab. Faithful Catholics whose children left the faith or became lukewarm don't always think to have a priest visit their loved ones. I saw some extraordinary faith in there, and even more suffering from this spiritual neglect. If you think life is hard when you can go to Mass every Sunday, try being laid up in a nursing home for many months or years in the midst of this priest shortage.

This had me thinking that the bishops, the Holy Father, and others could invite people to make a spiritual communion at these large Masses begging also for graces for these people who suffer in the midst of a sacramental famine. To go without Holy Communion for one Mass would certainly cause some suffering, but it would make us mindful of those around the world who suffer for long periods of time without the Eucharist, Confession, and other sacraments. This too has graces.

In closing...

I'll close with a quote from Bishop Schneider's latest book,

Corpus Christi

,

[which is published by Gracewing in the UK](#)

and sold through

[the Opus Angelorum site here in the US](#)

. I've modified the English from UK to US and added white space.

Bishop Schneider makes the point earlier in the book how defenseless Jesus is in the Eucharist. When you consider the Infant Jesus, who was also defenseless, He is even more defenseless under the appearance of the more lowly bread and wine. It is up to us to protect Him, and to come to his defense against mishandling and profanation. We need to pray that our bishops will see the role they play in His defense.

A new Eucharistic star is indeed, urgently needed, for the Eucharistic Body of Christ is the weakest and most defenseless being in the midst of the life of the Church. Bravely defending this Divine Poor Body surely would not receive the eulogy and the applause of world, but undoubtedly it would be applauded by the Saints, and in particular the holy "*Poverello*" - or poor man of Assisi, attracting

abundant Divine blessings. Indeed, the restoration of the visible honor due to the Eucharistic Body of Christ would be one of the most efficacious means for the renewal of His Mystical Body, the Church.

May God grant that the hearts and minds of the Shepherds of the Church in our days may be pierced by these words of Saint Francis of Assisi:

"I conjure all of you, brethren, with all the love of which I am capable and kissing your feet: give as much as you can of all reverence and all honor to the most holy Body of Our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Indeed, there is nothing else and no one else greater than the Sacred Host and each of even Its most minute fragments, for the Body of Christ is the Lord Himself: "*Corpus Christi enim Dominus est!*"



UPDATE 1: I see

[Kat at the Crescat just posted on this today too](#)

. She writes:

And then you got some Catholics, who treat the reality of Christ's presence in the Eucharist like... well, like this.



Lookit. The only person that *has* to receive the Eucharist during mass is the [priest](#). And the only time

we, as lay people, are required to receive the Eucharist is *once a year* at [Easter](#).

There's nothing in the GIRM or CCC or anywhere else that says, "Hey, lets distribute the Eucharist to thousands of people all at once. What could possibly go wrong?"

Abuses, that's what.

We really need to get over this idea that we deserve to receive the Eucharist at every mass, whether it's out of a sense of entitlement or belief that we aren't "actively participating" if we don't.

For interesting news items I don't have time to blog on, check out my Twitter Feed:

[@TeDeumBlog](#) [Te Deum Laudamus! Home](#)

***The obedient are not held captive by Holy Mother Church;
it is the disobedient who are held captive by the world!***

- Diane M. Korzeniewski

Note: The recommended links below are automatically generated by the tool, so they are not necessarily related content.

This contribution is available at <http://te-deum.blogspot.com/2015/01/why-not-spiritual-communion-for-most-at.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Why Catherine Adair is aces in my book: "No person is beyond redemption" [at Leaven For The Loaf]



Catherine on State House Plaza, defying the chill: “Embrace every life there is.”

This is a fan letter. It’s my blog and I can rant or rave however I want. Today, it’s rave. It’s my thank-you to Catherine Adair. She has a life full of blessings; she and her husband are rearing five children. My husband and I brought up five children, too, and we know that’s a pro-life ministry in itself (and it never ends). Catherine, with support from her family, goes above and beyond. She has a story to tell about her own experiences and about women in crisis who didn’t get the help they needed. Her story is also about pro-life conversion.

Catherine came to pro-life commitment by a route different from mine. I’ve learned from that. She makes me think in fresh ways about what it means and takes to be pro-life.

About Catherine: New Hampshire Right to Life scored a coup this year by bringing Massachusetts neighbor Catherine to Concord for the state’s biggest annual outdoor pro-life rally and march. Catherine’s description of herself, from her blog [The Harvest is Abundant](#): “I used to be pro-choice and worked for Planned Parenthood. Now I speak about the horror of working in an abortion clinic, and my personal experience with abortion. I hope to be able to bring more people to the truth.” She does that with charity and clarity, which can be hard to come by some days in the pro-life movement. She speaks out knowing that she could perfectly well say “enough already” to public witness. But she persists, bringing not just truth but also encouragement to her listeners.



l-r: Ellen Kolb, Shannon McGinley, Catherine Adair after 2011 press conference (photo courtesy Cornerstone Policy Research)

How I met her: For a brief time a few years ago, a majority of New Hampshire Executive Councilors thought that with ten other Title X providers in the state, they could afford to say no to a contract with the eleventh provider – which happened to be Planned Parenthood of Northern New England, New Hampshire’s #1 abortion provider. All political hell broke loose. I helped organize a press conference to stand up for one of the Councilors who voted against the PP contract and who was being targeted for particular abuse by PP supporters. A colleague of mine, Shannon McGinley, called me up to discuss arrangements. She said, “You’re not going to believe this. There’s a woman from Massachusetts who used to work for PP and wants to come help.” It was Catherine. So how did Shannon meet her? “You’re not going to believe this” (again) – “I came across her on Facebook.” Well, God bless Facebook.

Catherine’s presence at the podium turned out to be the most powerful and memorable part of the press conference. Her words about her time at PP made the idea of “abortion provider” into something concrete. She spoke with authority about the primacy of abortion in PP’s work despite PP’s insistence that abortion is only 3% of its business. She spoke briefly about her own long-ago abortion. She had nothing whatsoever to gain from making the trip to Concord. She did it because the truth mattered and because she knew some good people were suffering for challenging PP’s access to public money.



from Stand Up for Religious Freedom rally, Concord, 2012

We meet again: When the Obama Administration and the federal Department of Health and Human Services imposed their Obamacare contraceptive mandate, they did so knowing that some Americans

have religiously-based objections to helping pay for contraceptives and abortion-inducing drugs and devices. Too bad, said the President and his HHS Secretary. In over a hundred cities nationwide, Americans responded with religious freedom rallies to say “not so fast.” I was one of many New Hampshire residents who gathered outside the federal courthouse in Concord for a Stand Up for Religious Freedom rally. And who came to stand with us? None other than Catherine, with her family. Again, she had nothing to gain by doing this. She came anyway.

Taking it to D.C.: This year, Catherine traveled to the March for Life in Washington and did something extraordinary: with support from other post-abortive women and former abortion workers, she gave her testimony in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. That’s hardly her natural habitat, but there she was. Abortion advocates are always on the sidewalk in front of the Court on the day of the March, as if to defend the judicial branch from exposure to pro-lifers. Catherine was speaking to the abortion advocates as well as to the marchers. Her message is for all.



From Facebook: Catherine Adair with Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life, outside the U.S. Supreme Court building 22 January 2015

All I can say about that is that while she’s hit the big time, New Hampshire saw her first. Well, maybe second, after Massachusetts.

Excerpts from her remarks at New Hampshire’s March for Life

As a former abortion worker, what does she recommend to pro-lifers who encounter workers at abortion facilities? “The worst thing we can do is be confrontational, antagonistic. I think the best thing we can do is smile, say hello – just be that peaceful, kind, loving presence they need. Please, pray for the people working in the clinic. Nobody is beyond redemption. Nobody is beyond conversion. Embrace every life there is, wherever it is.”

On her own abortion and its immediate aftermath: “If someone had been there [on the sidewalk] the day I was there, if I’d had the courage to talk to somebody, maybe I’d have made a different decision. You just never know how what you’ll say will affect somebody.”

On working at Planned Parenthood in Boston: “[At first] I thought ‘oh, that’s great. Planned Parenthood is

really pro-woman.’ ...All we did was abortions, all day every day, Monday through Saturday....The first thing – the first thing – that happens in an abortion clinic is the money changes hands. You’re not getting anywhere until you pay for that abortion...I would describe the abortion procedure to the woman: ‘the doctor will gently extract the contents of your uterus.’ That’s it, because in abortion clinics you never talk about the humanity of the child. It’s all about dehumanizing the child. We didn’t even say ‘embryo.’ That’s too close to ‘fetus’ which is a little too close to ‘baby.’”

“...Nowhere in there did we ever talk about real options for her. What brought you into the clinic today? What’s making you think abortion is your best option? What’s going on in your life? How can we help you? Never, because my job was to sell that abortion.”

Assisting patients having first- and second-trimester abortions, and cleaning up “procedure rooms,” took a toll. “You know, I had counseled for second-trimester abortions. I had said ‘the doctor will gently extract the contents of your uterus.’ I didn’t know that he was going to go into her uterus with forceps and just grab at that baby...[I had] nightmares. Most people who work in abortion clinics do. You’d think I’d go running out of the clinic and say to the nearest person ‘D’you know what they’re doing in there? They’re killing babies!’ But I didn’t...My whole world was filled with people telling me that what I was doing was good, it was right, it was for the cause, it was pro-woman, and that all those crazy pro-lifers out there on the street wanted to kill me. And I believed it.”

Finally, she had enough of seeing abortion up close, and she left the clinic – “there’s a lot of turnover” – but becoming pro-life was a years-long process. What led to that conversion of heart and mind? “Basically, it was because I had children. I got married, I had children, and that really does change your perspective on things. My husband wanted to start going to church. He said ‘we really have to do something about the kids. I want the kids to go to Mass.’ So we went to church. And the first time we went, it was just like ‘I’m home.’”

“This wonderful priest said to me, ‘Catherine, don’t you know that God loves you?’ I just started to cry, because of course I didn’t believe that God loved me. I had murdered my own child. I had participated in the murder of thousands of children. But this priest, he told me to say the Rosary. As I prayed on the Mysteries, something just clicked for me. The grace that God can give, the forgiveness that He can give....One day at Mass, Jesus said to me, ‘Catherine, those are babies.’ Finally, the scales fell from my eyes. I was so afraid of going to that place of pain from my own abortion that I hadn’t been able to really think about it, how much each life is sacred and worth living. Finally, I was able to go to that place of pain and self-hatred and turn that into love. I look at my children, the children God has given me, and I am so grateful.”

It’s that love and gratitude of which Catherine speaks that really touches me. She gives me hope that even when I’m not feeling loving and grateful, even when I’m discouraged or angry over something politically life-related, even when I’m praying outside a facility and feeling very awkward, the choice to love and to be grateful is always there for me to make. Pro-life work is not about what I’m feeling. Anger isn’t final. Awkward isn’t forever. Spiritual exhaustion isn’t terminal.

Catherine has never scolded me for not being steadfast enough, although she could if she wanted to. She has never preached at me. She could (and possibly should) tell me to back away from the mic or the keyboard and just do something else. Instead, she’s set me an example of honesty and compassion. Rely on the grace of God, choose love, choose gratitude, even when it’s not easy: if she does it, maybe I can, too. Maybe.

Her final words in Concord echoed what she had said to us before the march. “Honestly, seeing everybody walking in front of the clinic with love in your heart really gives me strength and makes me realize that no person is beyond God’s love. No person is beyond redemption. Nobody. This is why they fear you – because you expose the lies. That’s why they have to say ‘oh, you hate women’ – because they don’t know what to do with that love.”

This contribution is available at <http://leavenforthe loaf.com/2015/01/25/catherine-adair-no-person-is-beyond-redemption/>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Abortion and Class Discrimination [at Designs by Birgit]

When we think of discrimination we often leap to an image of race. Yes, race discrimination is certainly an atrocity and we see it often - even in the choice of location for abortion facilities and the percentages of those affected. That abortion centers are primarily located in poorer, black neighborhoods has been documented. After all Margaret Sanger's intent was to eliminate the 'human weeds' among us - all the way to eugenics.

There are other classes of people who are cast aside when it comes to shielding babies from abortion, however. As a society, we've come to accept the abortion 'exceptions'. That small, but nonetheless worthy, segment of society is those who were conceived in rape or incest.

This is a deeply flawed attempt to deflect from the real issue of the humanity of any unborn child, by employing hypotheticals. "What about the rape or incest conceived child?" we are asked. If we allow ourselves to be distracted from the main issue - the humanity of all of the unborn - we do a disservice to humanity and to the unborn.. If we stray from the reality of the humanity of the child, we endanger our message – all life is precious. In the eyes of God, the wanted and the 'unwanted' are equally worthy. We must not allow our message to be diluted or we surrender to a world that will always allow abortion in

some instances

Classes of Discrimination

A child conceived in rape is no less human; she is no less a child of God. She is a gift to the world, brought about in a horrific way, but not at the expense of her worth. Her mother underwent a traumatically violent experience, yet this has no bearing on her right to live. The sins of the man who violated her mother could never be justly rectified by another act of violence against an innocent.

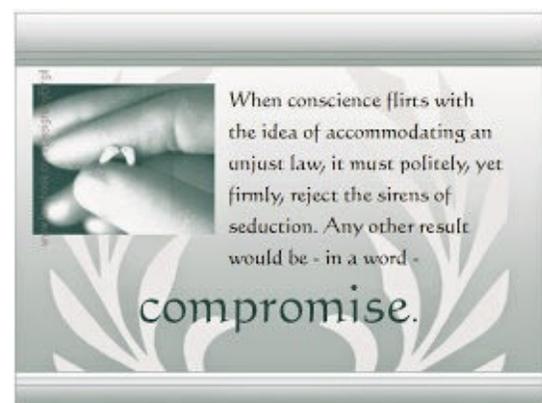
And what about the complete, yet developing baby before she hits the 20 week milestone? Again, if we allow our resolve to become dependent on specifics, our message is diluted. If the child couldn't feel pain, would it be okay to kill him? Of course not! That's why I'm uncomfortable with setting criteria for the worth of preservation. A child will turn away from a prodding tool in the womb when he is much younger than 20 weeks, but even if he didn't would he be any less human?

Tools of Division

Divide and conquer. Deflect and confuse. These are the tools of abortion advocates. We must not allow them to weaken our case. It's easy to become distracted but, in order to do the most good on behalf of our littlest brothers and sisters, we need to stay on course. All unborn children are human - at fertilization. They all have a God-given right to life, as individual people with souls.

Whether they are at the earliest stages of development, how they were conceived, and if they feel pain really isn't the issue. These are simply details that can be applied to their description - just as they can be described as black/white, male/female, blue/brown eyed, Catholic/agnostic, or heterosexual/homosexual. These descriptive details have absolutely nothing to do with their worth or their rights.

Let's support all humans. No exceptions, no distractions, and no compromise!



This contribution is available at <http://designsbybirgit.blogspot.com/2015/01/abortion-and-class-discrimination.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Whose Calls Are You Taking? [at Theologyisaverb]

Today

Whose Calls Are You Taking?



Some time ago I was approached by a friend's mother who was going through an extremely difficult family situation. As is often the case, I had not planned to be there at that moment, but had felt an inner pull to change my plans for the day.

Seeking advice, comfort and direction she began relaying the details as well as the inability to find any peace. Listening, I wondered initially if we should perhaps relocate to a different setting. Then quite suddenly, I became keenly aware of the Holy Spirit's presence. As she spoke I could feel her anxiety and fearfulness and knew that this was the time and place that each of us was meant to be.

Father, help me to let her know how much you love her. Let your Spirit guide my words and her to find you once again.

"Have you prayed recently?", I asked.

"I still go to mass on occasion, but I can't say that I feel close to God. I know the prayers that I was taught as a child, but I really don't know how to pray any other way."

"Can I ask you another question? Whose calls do you answer each day?"

"You mean on the phone? Well, that would be from my family or my close friends."

"Those moments are meaningful because conversation is so essential in our relationships. There is a give and a take, a time to listen and a time to speak. And when you do so, you each share in one another's lives."

"Yes, that is so true! Though lately, I want to help but question whether I am being listened to."



"God feels the same way . He is there waiting for us to talk to him and yet we so often let his call go unanswered. He wants so desperately to be in relationship with us, to be invited into our day and our problems. Sometimes, we simply need to start small." "Ever notice a particularly beautiful sunset or a gift of a new day or grandchild and feel compelled to say Thank you?"

"Oh, I have! I had forgotten about that!"

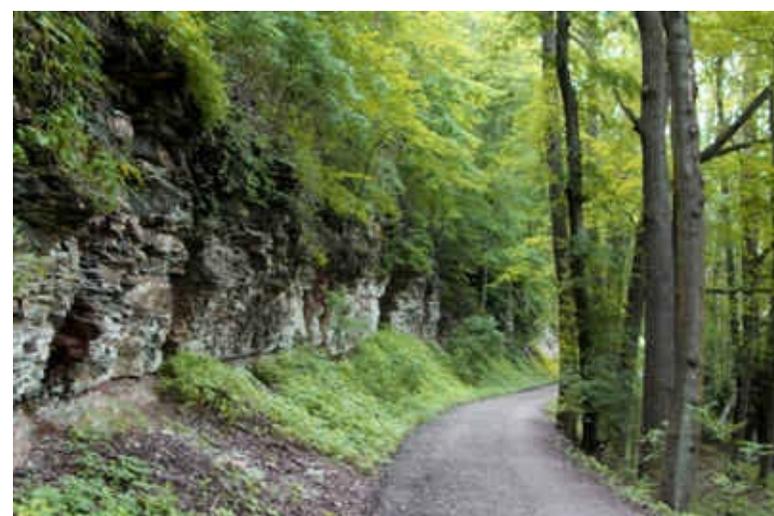
"Gratitude is a indelible part of becoming aware that God is near, noticing all the little ways that God is

there for us in our everyday. Today, I can say with certainty that God is here with us. If it's fine with you, could we pray together and ask for His help in this situation?"



"Yes, but how do we begin?.."

Father..thank you for the gift of bringing us together today. You love us so dearly and want to be ever close to us. This is our desire too today. Lord, please let "Mary" know that you have never left her-that you are there to listen, guide, and bring her peace. That though we do not know where the road leads that you are always walking beside us. Please also help remove the fear and anxiety that are troubling her, and replace it with your loving embrace. We love and praise you –in Your name we pray Amen.



Today, the readings from 1 Samuel (3:3-10; 19) and John (1:35-42), really hit home. I was reminded of this conversation and of the importance of listening in my faith life. For in this busy demanding world that we find ourselves in, hearing God's voice requires a desire to tune out the noise and tune into the Father. Moreover, it is being ready to pick up the "phone" when he calls rather than letting it go to voicemail. Only then can we "Come and see" what He has planned for us, where we are to go and lead others to Christ.

Reflection: Did I seek to listen to God today? Did I invite him prayerfully into my life-sharing my joys, concerns and difficulties with him? If not, why wait..He's standing by!

Peace,

Elizabeth

This contribution is available at <http://theologyisaverb.com/2015/01/18/whose-calls-are-you-taking/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |



As I drove toward the intersection, the light turned yellow, then red. I stopped, thankful that at least I would be the first driver out of the gate after this, the longest stoplight on our route. A red pickup truck pulled beside our car on the driver's side, and I saw a little smiling face looking at me from the passenger window. I was eye-to-eye with a girl about 5 or 6 years old. Her glistening eyes kept looking at me. Joy flooded her face. I stared wide-eyed at her and instinctively smiled back.

When she looked away briefly to dance a doll on her knees, I continued grumbling to my husband about our late start to meet our son, daughter-in-law and grandson for his birthday dinner.

Turning back to my left, there she was again with that generous smile of innocent friendliness! Her smile was so contagious that my shoulders relaxed and I felt anxiety drain from my body. I motioned to my husband to notice the smiling girl in the truck beside us. He commented about her beautiful smile.

We stared and smiled at her beaming face with delight until she turned to respond to a man in the driver's seat next to her, probably her father. Then I saw the rosary hanging from the rear view mirror and praised God that he sent this moment of joy from a Christian Catholic family.

Soon she was back smiling at us unabashedly. Then the light turned green, the truck turned left and we headed for the state highway ahead.

Did she wave goodbye? I couldn't tell, but wished I could give her a sign of my thankfulness for lightening my heart of the worry of arriving late for dinner.

In the minute or two it took for the light to change from red to green, she gave me the gift of pure joy! Her shining face reminded me that joy is a gift from God. As Pope Saint John Paul II said:

God made us for joy. God is joy, and the joy of living reflects the original joy that God felt in creating us.

What moments of unexpected joy can you discover today?

This contribution is available at <http://joyalive.net/joy-at-the-stoplight/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Stained Glass Windows [at Busy Catholic Moms]

Going to church in the winter, with shorter days and earlier evenings, brought something to my mind recently. I attended mass at my parents' church on the eve of the Solemnity of Mary a week or so ago. St. Ann's is the church that I attended from 6th grade until I went to college – a lovely older stone church with beautiful stained glass windows up and down the sides and in the towers of the church.

As I walked up to the church before mass that evening, I was struck by the beauty of the stained glass images shining out from the inside of the lighted church. The myriad of colors told brightly colored stories of the Bible in the dark, cold night. Upon entering the church, the stained glass windows became somewhat muted. Still lovely in their craftsmanship, they did not have the brightness of the colors shining through them.

Realizing how little I could see from the inside that night, I was reminded how those same windows reflect the beautiful sunlight through them during the bright daytime hours, sometimes making the inside of



the church exceedingly bright.

And it came to my mind that night that we, as Christians, are kind of like those stained glass windows, or at least, we need to be.

On bright, beautiful days, we need to reflect the light of Christ to others, allowing Him to shine through us. Only with the brightness of His love can we shine into other people's lives, coloring their vision with



our faith in Him.

On dark, cold nights, when despair and loneliness seem to echo in the outside world, we need to be the bright light in the darkness, reflecting the glow of Christ in our hearts. Through the faith in our hearts we can shine out to others who need to see the hope and goodness of the Lord.

May we all be beautiful stained glass windows reflecting the light of the Son through us to others and

shining into the darkness of the world.

This contribution is available at <http://busycatholicmoms.com/sample-page/stained-glass-windows/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

"Pseudo-friendship?" [at Declaring the Whole Counsel]

So the other day, someone stopped by the rectory and asked me personally if I would spend time with him and be his friend. Well, not actually. In truth, I got a pre-written email from a company saying that someone wanted to "friend me" on their website. I deleted it. "Friending" someone: I do not recall "friend" being a verb, but I guess now it is. The problem is not the change in language, the problem is that we have changed our language to use a word for something that is virtually the exact opposite of its true meaning.

It is interesting how the new word "friending" is clearly not confused with the related word "befriending". What does it mean to "befriend" someone? It certainly does not mean to send them an impersonal electronic message asking to have an impersonal electronic relationship with them. When you "befriend" someone you "help, assist, or favor" a person. I am sure that someone may insist that "friending" on social networks is the same as (or at least similar to) befriending them, but in actuality the two are nothing alike. In fact, there is nothing about "friending" someone on a social website that requires someone actually to "befriend" them. You can be impersonal, ignore their needs, and merely use the electronic relationship for your own personal benefit. Does this sound like the Christian definition of a friend?

One website says: "You do not need to know someone personally in order to friend him or her." No bones about it; "friending" has nothing to do with being a "friend". What an odd turn of phrase, but we really should not be surprised at this. We have, as a society, been steadily rejecting a godly form of love for a worldly form of self-pleasure; naturally we will also forget what a true friend is. There are so many different options for "pseudo-friendship" on the web, that it seems most have chosen that over the reality of true friends. The more our communication becomes impersonal and disconnected from real Christian charity, the more we will find friendship becoming an unnecessary responsibility. True friendship entails accountability to one another, as well as an extended effort that each of the parties puts in for the sake of maintaining the friendship. This is nothing like the electronic "friending" that is going on today.

To "friend" someone might seem like a nice gesture; but is it really? With all the technology that is supposed to enable us to have more social interaction with others, are we really a friendlier and more social society? "Social network" websites have been quite successful in making us less social than we ever were before. For this reason, I have to say that the problems of "social networking" far exceed the benefits. When we look at the direction our society is going in, it is easy to see that we are becoming less and less social in our interactions. Families are breaking apart more and more quickly, people are suing each other in court for every grievance they can come up with, and others just go out and shoot someone when they get upset.

These "networks" are more properly called "anti-social networks". Should we allow ourselves to be taken in by them? Should we allow them to desensitize us to social ineptitude? Or will we reject them all outright and choose instead to follow Christ in loving our neighbor? We cannot love him if we prefer the most impersonal and irresponsible methods of communicating with him. Examine your own choices that you have made on the internet. Is it helping you to find true friends, or only false friends?

Charlie Hebdo and the Pauline Mission [at Association of Pauline Cooperators]



For the record, I am not Charlie.

Like everyone else, I was horrified by the events of these past several days. I don't know how many times I've prayed for those who lost their lives, for their loved ones, and for those whose values, so different from mine, led them to kill in the name of God.

In its aftermath, I've also prayed about two phenomena—Charlie Hebdo's hubris, that goads the targets of its satire to strike back, and the massive global outpouring of support for the magazine, mutating the tragedy into a cause that licenses media professionals to communicate, unfettered, whatever they will.

The international reading of the event:

Someone directed me to a blog last week that suggested, in Charlie Hebdo's defense, that the magazine should not be turned into an icon of journalistic freedom. In reality, the article stated, the company is not keen on championing the rights of media professionals. Charlie Hebdo is interested only in Charlie Hebdo. Could it be that the dark side of the media culture is exploiting this on its own behalf?

The hubris:

Nothing could ever justify such a massacre of human beings. From his eternal vantage point, the prophet Muhammad needs no one to defend his honor. Doing so was and is nothing more than a smokescreen for small egos. Still, I marvel at the magazine's indignation, especially since key players there were protected by armed guards. Violence begets violence, and Charlie's journalistic bullying was in every sense violent.

Nevertheless, allow me to submit a caveat here: I do not advocate censorship. Our Pauline Center for Media Studies puts it this way: "Control is for the moment; communication is for a lifetime." Bl. James Alberione's own thought on this developed over the years. Initially a book burner, after St. Paul's example in Ephesus (Acts 19:17-19), he later recommended "turning on the light" instead of running around wailing about the dark. "We need to put down the scissors of censorship, and pick up the camera and microphone. We need to speak in the language of our own time, because God is so beautiful."

There's another perspective, perhaps more fundamental, that bypasses arbitrary judgments about what's

appropriate, who gets to decide, and even the role of religion in that process: what makes activity art, indeed what makes it human.

The tasks of any living being are directed toward its preservation and propagation, that is, its own survival and the continuation of its species. For us human beings, the habitual activities needed for these tasks, the

arts,

involve more than biology. Human art is more than technical execution or skill. A bird building a nest can do as much. We humans engage all our powers to achieve our aims. That is, we understand, desire, and will what we're doing, and then organize our activities. When this activity serves what is truly human and becomes a habit, or virtue in the broadest sense of the word—physical, material, intellectual, or moral—it becomes art.

Our actions are genuinely human when they're infused with

meaning

consistent with the

ultimate

meaning of human existence. In short, they make us more of who we already are—human beings within human society. For an action—in this case, communication—to be truly human, or art, it must contribute to the primary task of making us what we are: rational, willing, and loving beings in relationship.

We human beings reject bullying in the media, because it destroys the purpose of communication, which is more than just to convey thoughts and feelings. Thanks perhaps to social media this purpose is clear: to build relationships. Vitriol precludes that possibility. If I ridicule you and all that you hold dear, you're not likely to say, "Thank you very much for enlightening me." When satire is inclusive, when the satirist says in effect, "We're all in the same boat," it can make us ask important questions of ourselves. Stephen Colbert's "Report" persona poked fun at his own real-life foibles even as it playfully skewered others, and with all its bawdy humor, plenty of people, guests and viewers alike, loved him for it. On the other hand, when satire makes a caricature of us or our societies, when it derides us and does not respect the integrity even of satirists, but strokes their egos, it does not build relationships. It ceases to be human.

The most authentic limits on communication are not imposed from the outside. Communication, because of its purpose of building truly human relationships, imposes such limits upon itself.

We decry verbal or "artistic" abuse not because it's offensive. "Nice" varies from culture to culture, age to age. Fear of offending others never stopped Jesus from saying what people needed for their salvation. But he said it with respect for the person and in mercy, because he sought not his own glory, but that of the Father. If people still chose to take offense, that was their doing.

All of nature, including the human person and human activity, glorifies God by being and doing what God created it to be and do. When we say, "Glory to God, peace to humanity" (the Pauline motto), we are praying to be what God wants us to be: truly human. We Christians know that this "project" is directed to

the fullness of eternal life, and as such, tells us something about our freedom and responsibility. John Paul II said, “Freedom consists not in doing what we like, but in having the right to do what we ought.” This is the glory of God. Whose glory is Charlie Hebdo after? Whose glory do I seek?

Photo: LeJC, Wikimedia Commons, January 7, 2015

Sr. Margaret J. Obrovac, FSP, originally from San Francisco, has been a Pauline evangelizer since 1973 and has worked in various phases of the mission of the Daughters of St. Paul. Since attending the nine-month Charism Course in Rome in 2012-2013, she is now based in Boston, where she serves on the provincial Cooperator Team in the area of ongoing formation.

This contribution is available at <http://paulinelait.com/2015/01/charlie-hebdo-and-pauline-mission.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Making it through Hard Times

“Suffering has to come because if you look at the cross Jesus has his head bending down. He wants to kiss you. And he has his arms opened wide. He wants to embrace you. When you feel miserable inside look at the cross. Suffering, pain, sorrow, humiliation, feelings of loneliness, are nothing but the kiss of Jesus, a sign you have come so close he can kiss you. Suffering, pain, humiliation – this is the kiss of Jesus!” – Blessed Theresa of Calcutta



Hard times, we are all going to have them. And, some of us get through them better than others. You would never know what some people are experiencing. They have the ability to maintain a positive attitude, they continue to be grateful, live in the moment, and offer their sufferings up to God placing their troubles at the foot of the cross.

Others don't do so well. They suffer openly, have a negative destructive attitude and feel that their happiness has been shortchanged. They wear their pain on their shoulders for everyone to see. They make themselves miserable by obsessing over their problems.

What can we do to help us make it through the tough times?

1. It helps if we realize that pain and suffering are part of life. We are taught from an early age to avoid pain. Don't touch the hot stove, look both ways before crossing the road, and be careful or you'll poke an eye out, are drilled into us.

But, the truth is, we will all face adversity in our lives, some more than others. An illness, job loss, relationship breakup, loss of a loved one, we are all going to experience something painful, sorrowful or humiliating. But, we grow through what we experience. Life's greatest lessons are learned through tough times not pain free times.

2. Our attitude is everything. When we are faced with adversity we have two choices; accept it and let go of the negativity that comes with it, or obsess over it and in doing so become anxious and miserable.

“Life is not the way it's supposed to be, it's the way it is. The way you cope is what makes the difference.” – Virginia Satir

3. **You can't change the situation but you can change yourself.** You will never change until you take responsibility for your attitude. It's amazing that when we change ourselves our circumstances change too! Not the other way around.
4. **No matter the situation, there is always something to be thankful for.** An attitude of gratitude can help us overcome any situation. When we realize that no matter what we have experienced we still have many things in our lives to be thankful for. There is always someone who would happily exchange places with us.

“What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

5. **Don't compare yourself to others.** And, don't rely on others to validate you. Remember, the friends that seems to be living the perfect life are having struggles of their own. Your situation may pale compared to theirs. You may never know the extent of their suffering.
6. **You are not alone and things will change.** I learned at a young age that other than death and taxes the only thing certain is that things will change. As the old saying goes, “This too shall pass!” Anything is possible but great things often take time.
7. **In God, all things are possible.** Do you believe that miracles can happen? I do. I've seen and read of hundreds. And, I've experienced them myself. You can too!

“Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.” –Philippians 4:7

Put your troubles in God's hands, trust that He will get you through your hard times and grant you the peace that surpasses all understanding. A peace that will guard your heart and mind, until He sees you through your pain.

You are in my prayers, my friend.

This contribution is available at <http://tonyagnesi.com/2015/01/making-it-through-hard-times/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Today's find: Poppy-seed Bagel [at With Us Still]

My simple breakfast—poppy seed bagel, slathered in cream cheese—stirred up a lovely memory this morning.

It was about forty years ago this month that (at the tender age of 17) I ate my very first bagel: also a poppy seed, covered in cream cheese.

They didn't have bagels, you see, in the small town where I grew up. So my first taste in 1975 turned into a rite of passage of sorts. As a college freshman, I was stretching my palate a bit...and sampling foods my parents had never served me.

Not that a bagel qualifies as exotic cuisine in anybody's book. (*'It's like a doughnut, dipped in concrete,'* is the description I remember hearing from a friend at the time.)

And no doubt, this fact helped to imprint the memory: When I enjoyed my first bagel, I was on a date of sorts with the fair young lass who'd later become my wife. After studying at [SLU's Pius XII Library](#) until closing time, we'd trekked across the street to the student-run snackery in the basement of a hotel-turned-dorm then known as Lewis Hall. I don't remember whether I paid for Gerri's bagel, too. But I do remember being grateful that she had simple tastes and didn't seem offended (or put off) by my meager means or the notion of an impromptu date.

So I suppose all that helps to explain why poppy seed bagels have become a sort of soul food in my life. They never fail to trigger a surge of affection for those happy days at SLU, and more particularly, [for the relationship](#) that has sustained and blessed me in countless ways over the four decades since.

Like the Israelites [gathering their manna](#) in the desert, I find that I am profoundly nourished by bagels. For in them, I have discovered a personal proof of God's faithfulness. Bagels move me to pray in a way reminiscent of the prayer we use at the offertory of each Mass...

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation,

For through your goodness we have received the bread we offer you:

Fruit of the earth and work of human hands.

It will become for us the bread of life.



Ummm...food for the soul...

Let us pause now...to recall that we are in the presence of the Holy One.

IHS

This contribution is available at <http://withusstill.wordpress.com/2015/01/14/todays-find-poppy-seed-bagel/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Nursing's Soundtrack [at One Thousand Words a Week]



Have you heard the [Pure Michigan](#) radio spots? They're very evocative, and so very effective. When I hear the familiar toggling piano notes, I anticipate the string section taking up the melody in short order, fleshing out the warm, welcoming images conjured up by the narrator, and then...they've got me: Suddenly, I'm in Michigan, on the beach or in the woods, laughing, cavorting with my kids, soaking it all up.



And, you know what? I know they're just commercials, but somehow I always feel better after hearing them. The narrator's calming voice, the peaceful mental pictures, and the soothing music – especially the soothing music. Those Pure Michigan ads are like balm, like little oases in my busy day.

Such is the curative potency of music – an idea that's been around a long time. “Many ancient cultures used sound and music for healing,” Byron Janis noted in the [Wall Street Journal](#). “Pythagoras called it ‘music medicine.’ In the Middle Ages, the study of music became a *mandatory* part of a physician's education.”

That sure makes sense. We've known about music as medicine from childhood when our mothers would

softly sing us familiar songs to console us after injuries, either real or imagined. And later, in our teens, didn't we get into our cars, put on our favorite tapes (or CDs or MP3 files) after emotionally jarring events?

Of course, Mr. Janis (and Pythagoras for that matter) referred to music as medicine primarily in terms of physical healing, but we've all had some experience of that as well. Think back to the last time you had a serious injury, or you were laid low by a lingering illness. You can only watch so much TV, right? Only so



many videos. Silence is nice, of course, but sometimes it's our favorite music that brings relief – like auditory comfort food, not just to distract from pain and fatigue, but also as a somatic remedy.

Musician and songwriter once said that music allows us to satisfy “the longing that human beings have for unification with something higher and more harmonious than their existence and their mundane lives.” It's clear that's especially true for those touched by illness and disease, and many have documented this reality – like Michael Rossato-Bennett. His award winning film, [Alive Inside](#), explores how music can restore cognitive function to the elderly suffering from even the severest forms of dementia. “I've found that music is one of our greatest wisdoms and one of our greatest tools for going through life's challenges,” Rossato-Bennett [says](#). “Every religion and spiritual practice understands that music has the capacity to bring us to our best.”



And what's true for the sick and suffering is also true for those called to care for them – like members of my profession: Nurses. I used to work on an oncology unit, and I often wished I could've had my own soundtrack following me around – you know, like in the movies. Peppy songs to spur me on when I felt fatigued, and meditative numbers as a salve when I felt discouraged.

OK, personal soundtracks in the hospital aren't possible, but if they were, I know who I'd feature on mine: [Van Morrison](#). Why? Here's a sample playlist – see if you can pick up the theme:

1. : When we're really sick, it seems like the end of the world. This song speaks to the possibility of turning the dirt of our lives – our disease and brokenness – into gold. We need but to surrender, and let the . Nursing is a profession that promotes and fosters this.
2. : This is the role of the nurse in fostering the healing described above. We don't fix, despite the adrenalin-rush TV shows about healthcare we love to watch. Clearly, nurses have a role to play in carrying out doctor's healing directives, but our primary function is to be an advocate and intercessor – a priestly role. The [tasks of nursing](#) aren't the point in the end. Rather, it's the *caring* that ought to occur while the tasks are being accomplished that is at nursing's core.
3. : Nursing is an exhausting profession, and it's impossible to accomplish on our own steam. Consequently, we *have* to turn to our [higher power](#) – our Jesus, as Christians know him – for the grace to accomplish the impossible. We must get rejuvenated, or else we're no good for anybody.

Catch the theme? Heaven, and the longing for heaven – Van's songs constantly direct our attention to paradise: . 'In the Garden'. . 'These Are the Days'.

In other words, the links we can find between here and the hereafter.

Nurses know better than most that life is fragile and that, despite our best efforts, everybody dies of something sooner or later. Nonetheless, there's still a reason to keep healing and caring and sacrificing for others despite our mortal end game. Healthcare might be a losing battle in the short run, but we have a vision for something beyond, and Van's music is the perfect soundtrack – a pure, .

This contribution is available at <http://onethousandwordsaweek.wordpress.com/2015/01/11/nursings-soundtrack/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

The Sunday Bulletin Indicator: Fact or Fiction? [at Yard Sale of the Mind]



Simply must have this in your hands before Mass begins, or, or, goodness knows what will happen!

An old theory that I just made up: The likelihood one will be subjected to heresy and liturgical irregularities increases greatly if there is a 'greeter' person handing out parish bulletins to people on the way **into** Mass. Within this category, the more energetically and cheerfully they are handed out, the worse it is going to be.

This theory was formulated this afternoon when a very cheery, energetic person handed me a bulletin on my way into Mass at a very modern-looking parish I rarely attend (had to drop off daughter #2 at some rehearsal (she techs for several local theater groups) at 12:00, and this parish was on the way home). This event brought to mind a couple other parishes where I'd had similar experiences, and a sense of impending doom settled upon me: oh, no, I thought, there is a significant correlation in my anecdotal data set between cheery, energetic greeter-people handing me a parish bulletin on my way in and unspeakable theological and liturgical horrors being inflicted on the congregation.

Now, it's a bit much, it seems to me, to have people hand out bulletins at all, even after Mass – what's wrong with leaving them on tables near the doors, and letting people pick them up for themselves if they want one? But handing them out **before** Mass? Years ago, when I first ran into this practice and had not yet mellowed into the gentleman and scholar I am today,(1) I baffled a poor greeter-person by asking: 'Is this so I have something to read during the homily?'

If only. These memories shall remain unspoken.

Back to today. Turns out that this parish puts hymns and prayers in its bulletin, so it kinda makes sense, sort of, to hand them out. Except that they also have the fat combo missal/hymnals, so – what kind of songs and prayers is it necessary to put in the bulletin?

Then, in preparation for Mass, we were instructed to stand and greet our neighbors, lest anyone think we're there for some reason other than each other.

A few 'hi's' and handshakes later, Mass began. We sang the kind of song you'd expect. When father goes to the altar, he gave the mini-homily that is traditional in this setting, and talked about how it was still Christmas, and that after today we put away the celebration and begin the work of Christmas, because to Catholics, every day is Christmas – every day, we need to welcome Christ into our lives. He pointed out how important the sign of the cross that we make upon entering church was, and how we should make that sign many times during the day, to remind ourselves who we are.

He said many other good things as well. I think he may have forgotten to make the sign of the cross himself – or maybe I missed it, lots was going on.

But: nothing heretical. A bit on the psychobabble and touchy-feely end of things – but orthodox-ish.

Later, during the proper homily homily, father did the unexpected: he cajoled and badgered people to: 1, show up for more than just weekly Mass; 2. get themselves to confession; and, in general, 3. start being real Catholics rather than just putting on a show or going through the motions. He didn't try to make people feel good about themselves just they way they are. Wow.

That was unexpected, bracing, and utterly orthodox. Good job, father, and may God bless you this upcoming year.

So, we are forced to declare: Fiction! The liturgy could have used a quick kick in the behind, but the orthodoxy level of what was actually said was very high.

1. Ha.

This contribution is available at <http://yardsaleofthemind.wordpress.com/2015/01/11/today-at-mass-the-sunday-bulletin-indicator-fact-or-fiction/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Trusting in Tin Roofs [at Making It In Vermont]



Our tin roof as it is mid repair.

It has been an interesting January to say the least here at our little home in Vermont. Just as Christmas was packing up, and in the early morning hours of Epiphany Sunday, my husband Kevin and I awoke to the sound of our carbon monoxide detector telling us to evacuate the house. We quickly shook off our sleep and got all 6 kids (our oldest was at a sleep over) out to our wet snowy driveway and into our minivan to wait for the Fire Dept. to arrive and evaluate the situation...

Long story short, the very kind volunteer firefighters who got out of bed to help us at 4am found no carbon monoxide in our home, but they did find water dripping into the detector. The firefighters turned off our upstairs power so it would not come into contact with the water and advised us to find someone to come diagnose and fix the problem.

Later in the day we found a contractor who confirmed that our roof was leaking. The dripping from the hall carbon monoxide/smoke detector had spread to 4 different spots on our bedroom ceiling by that time. Thankfully he was able to be at our house the next day to tear out the ceiling of our bedroom and hallway and repair the roof.

What he found when he started working was a completely saturated bedroom ceiling, insulation totally dripping with water, and thrown in for good measure, snow. It was a leak that had been going on for some time with subsequent rot and mold in the boards of the roof.

At it's most gnarly, with all insulation off the roof above our bedroom as well as the sheet rock on the ceiling and with the peak of the roof exposed to the open air, Vermont experienced the very coldest days of the year. It was a challenge to heat our house through the night at -15 degrees and during the subsequent sub zero days. Thankfully we have a wood stove for additional heat, because our baseboards heaters were struggling to crank out the warmth. Another blessing is that our heat does not run through our bedroom so we could just shut that door and there were no pipes in there to freeze, though the upstairs bathroom pipes did freeze for the first time ever this month (3x!) but no bursting of pipes thankfully.

Kevin patiently nursed them back from frozen to flowing by heating them with my hairdryer.

Two and a half weeks into our roof overhaul Kevin and I are still sleeping on our living room couches. Apparently our roof was put on improperly which led to the leaking, but because of the mold and rot our insurance is covering a good chunk of the roof replacement. Yay mold and rot! (never thought I would say that!). And we have a contractor willing to work in 5 degree weather outside on our roof, another blessing.

The kids rooms are on the first floor so they have had minimal disruption and I have had lots of great opportunities this month for patience, perseverance, kindness, faith, and hope.

God just keeps telling me to put my trust in Him and Him alone...

I was so excited for the tin roof when we bought this house. The roof was only 3 years old when we bought our home 7 years ago. I thought tin roofs were pretty trouble free, at least that was my perception. From what I knew of tin roofs, they are very practical in our cold snowy climate and are superior in design to the typical shingled roof. So the tin roof on our home gave me a sense of safety and stability.

How wrong I was. This feeling of safety being slipped out from under me has brought up memories of August of 2006, 8 months after we moved to Vermont when our third son C was just 3 1/2 months old. We were living with Kevin's parents. Kevin had been substitute teaching at the elementary school down the road during the school year and for the summer found work there on the janitorial crew. He was just a mile from his parents home where we were staying. I felt so safe with him so close by and at an elementary school to boot!

That sense of safety meant a lot to me as it was a time in my life when I experienced a lot of anxiety and fear. Here's a little context for this:

Living in Massachusetts just south of Boston, I was 4 months pregnant with our first son and an art teacher when the September 11 attacks occurred. Overseeing study hall with high school junior and seniors at the time I remember one of the students asking to turn on the TV as they had heard that a plane had hit one of the Twin Towers in New York City. Not long after turning it on we watched the first tower fall, soon after the newscast cut to Washington D.C. and informed us that The Pentagon had been hit by a plane. At the time it felt like the whole United States was under attack. I was terrified something had happened to Kevin who was in Washington D.C. on a business trip.

It took hours before I could get any news. When I finally got through to his sister who was living in Virginia, I found out he was safe and had been visiting the National Zoo during some down time when everything happened. He ended up making it out of the city, staying at his sister's house and then taking a train back home after a couple of days. But like the rest of the United States, I felt devastated and terrified.

This feeling stayed with me for years as we lived just south of Boston and Kevin traveled daily on the "T" to work right next to the Hancock Tower (a possible terrorist target). So when we eventually moved to quaint and quiet Vermont to be closer to his family, I finally felt he was safe.

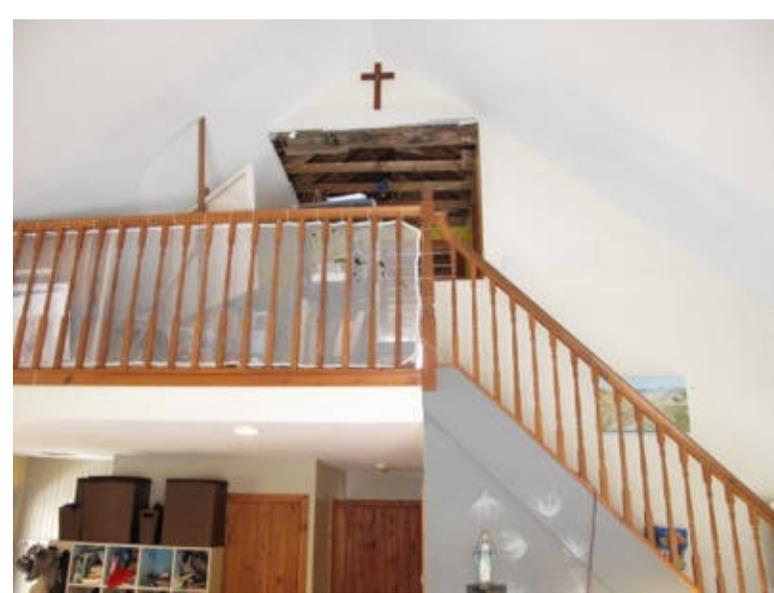
Back to Vermont, August 2006. I was at a birthday party for a friend's child at a lake in a neighboring town. V and K were happily playing on the swing set while I wore C in a sling. A man came up to us and

said “Someone shot up a bunch of folks at Essex Elementary School”. I said “My husband works there!” I thought for certain he was gone. After what felt like forever but really was only minutes I was able to reach him on the phone at his mother’s house. He had come home early, one of the guys on the janitorial crew left early to get his car fixed and everyone else decided to call it a day too. They left no more than five minutes before the shooter had arrived. Two people’s lives were taken that day and many more crushed by the events.

So much for safety.

My tin roof didn’t keep us dry and moving to Vermont didn’t keep us safe, but God has given me peace in it all. He is teaching this hard heart that putting my faith in the things/situations of this earth will never give me peace.

The picture below says it all I think loud and clear.



Upstairs ceiling mid repair with “you know who” reminding me who’s in charge.

Wishing you all peace in the storms of your life.

Love,

Lisa

This contribution is available at <http://www.makingitinvermont.com/2015/01/trusting-in-tin-roofs/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

From Anti-Semitism to Anti-Christism; The 21st Century Holocaust is Upon Us [at It Makes Sense to Me]

IT MAKES SENSE TO ME

By Larry Peterson

Recently the Anti-Defamation League conducted a global survey asking questions about the Holocaust. Unbelievably, two-thirds of the respondents (mostly younger people) had NEVER heard of the Holocaust and, for those that had, many did not believe the history and suggested that it was simply exaggerated. The rejection of a history so recent and so well documented boggles the mind.

The term, "Denial" is a stock psychological term and most everyone knows what it means when used in proper context. Denying the existence of the Holocaust transcends "Denial". I believe that Holocaust denial must first be fueled by a self-absorbed apathy that results in indifference to all things that do not concern the "denier". The journey to denying Truth then becomes easier if it might cause one so absorbed to experience "pain or discomfort".

After being so weakened with one's own self-love, denying the Holocaust becomes easy. Let's face it, the horrors inflicted upon millions and millions of fellow human beings by their own kind is hard to fathom. But to deny or reject the documented history of such an era is just asinine. If you are among those who might "deny" the Holocaust ever happened you are one step away from falling into the bottomless pit of idiocy.



Seventy (70) years ago Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated. Today, genocide is once again running rampant in parts of Africa, Asia and the Middle-east, and is widening like a swarm of unstoppable locusts spreading slowly and viciously across the world. What is the difference of the genocide perpetrated by the Nazis in Germany or the genocide being perpetrated by ISIS and radical Muslim Extremists in Iraq,

Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan and even Europe and bit by bit in the United States? The answer-
-NOTHING.

Nothing is different because the end result is the same. Extermination of those that are hated. Whatever the reason one has for committing these atrocities does not matter. Hate is hate and it comes from an 'evil spirit' that has captured and harnessed each and every one of those haters having them commit their atrocities with glee and pleasure. How sick and twisted this is. How sick and twisted it is to deny it is happening now as it did then. How irresponsible and derelict in their responsibilities are the educators and historians and those who know better to NOT teach this history and, worse yet, to alter and/or taint it.

The picture above is not fake. It is not a sketch or a painting. It is of a REAL place. It is the entrance to Auschwitz/Birkenau in Poland. People like you and I---men, women, children, moms and dads, brothers and sisters, grandparents, cousins and friends---were all brought to this place against their will. Upon arrival at this annex of Hades, they were immediately either put to work as slaves or sent to the gas chambers and murdered. They had been dehumanized, declared "sub-human" and efficiently eradicated. Ladies and gentlemen, young and old alike, there is NO DENYING THIS.

Yes, they were real people. They had dreams and hopes and loved and sang and danced and enjoyed a nice meal. They loved Hanukkah and Christmas (there were over two thousand Catholic priests murdered in the Holocaust and many Catholic nuns). Included among those possessing "lives unworthy of life" were, gypsies, Soviets, homosexuals, disabled persons, Slavs, religious and political dissidents, and non-Jewish poles and Dutch and Austrians and French and on and on. Six million Jews and another six million non-Jews. And people DENY that the Holocaust actually happened. Are you kidding me?

It is the year 2015. When Auschwitz was liberated General Eisenhower told his people to photograph everything lest the day comes when people begin to forget. The photos and film and records of this vicious genocide is there for all the world to see. Yet people deny it and schools may teach it in a cursory manner if at all. ISIS is running rampant throughout the Middle East and parts of Africa wantonly killing Christians without repercussion. Thousands upon thousands of innocent people, including Americans, have been killed in ISIS's world wide "Jihad" against the "infidels".

ISIS just published a 22 minute video of the the most heinous and barbaric execution of a captured Jordanian pilot. They burned him alive in a cage for all the world to see. Unlike the Nazis who tried to camouflage their genocide the cowardly barbarians of ISIS want the world to see what they do and hope that we cower in fear. They have publicly beheaded Americans, Japanese, French, British and others from around the world. They plan to continue their barbarous work on our very shores. Remember Fort Hood, Boston, and Oklahoma City?

It seems to me that the United States of America, a country comprised of people rooted in all nations of the world and blessed with an abundance of technology and resources, has a responsibility to take the lead in the fight against these maniacal terrorists who kill, unhesitatingly, even our children. They hate us and are waging war against us and our friends around the world. It is time for our leaders to forget "political correctness", strap on some American pride and spit bullets into the eye of this thing called ISIS.

The 20th century is gone but not forgotten for millions of us. Our children and grandchildren deserve to experience some 20th century peace and prosperity like we did. God help us all and may God always bless America.

This contribution is available at <http://slipperywillie.blogspot.com/2015/02/from-anti-semitism-to-anti-christism.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Deepening Our Prayer Lives [at Children of The Church]

I was so blessed to be able to have a day retreat to be with God and a group of wonderful women from our Catholic Homeschool Co-op at the Pro Sanctity Retreat Center in our community. I am always looking for ways to reconnect with God and deepen my spiritual life, so I was thrilled to hear that our Homeschool Co-Op puts on a yearly women's day retreat. I was feeling even more of a pull to take this day away with God after we experienced the

[loss of our son Samuel by miscarriage](#)

. I knew that I needed time to be quiet in prayer and process through my grief on the path to healing. I gained so much wisdom at the retreat and am feeling refreshed and ready to re-examine my prayer life and be more available to receive God on a daily basis. I wanted to share with you some of what I learned in hope that it might help you in your prayer life as well.

Just as children learn from us as parents how to speak and how to act, we learn how to mirror God's image by going to Him in prayer and being open to hearing His words and how He wants us to respond. It is essential that we take time daily to pray, and that means not only say the rosary or read the daily scripture but to have "imaginative prayer" with God. With this type of prayer we are truly entering a relationship with God and talking to him about our sorrows, joys and sufferings throughout each day. Even though he knows all of our actions and thoughts he still wants to hear from us about our thoughts, feelings and desires.

We learned about praying with the acronym

A. R. R. R.

which stands for Acknowledge, Relate, Receive, Respond.

Acknowledge:

We need to be aware of what is going on inside of our heart and then learn how to relate these feelings to God. We can think "This is how I am feeling, but I am not sure why". We then dive deeper to give that emotion a name and accept that God cares about us and our life and wants to hear about it.

Relate:

In this step we are telling Jesus everything; what we feel, think and what we want. There is a big difference between thinking thoughts internally throughout the day and taking them to God to relate with Him. We need to personally let him into our lives to know and understand our deepest feelings. If we are in a difficult place and do not know how to communicate our true feelings we can use the Psalms as a guide, which speak through many different emotions of joy and suffering.

Receive:

In this part of our prayer we need to sit back, and be patient. This part of prayer is God's work and

God's gift to us. We make ourselves available to be receptive to truly receiving God. We need to trust that God is listening to us and wanting to fill our lives with His love and truth. The priest leading our retreat gave us the beautiful example that just as women can physically make room for another person to grow inside of our own being, we also need to be open and aware of making room for God in our being and truly ready to receive Him.

Respond:

Here we respond to what we are receiving. We can respond in thanksgiving, in tears or in laughter. It can be a response of a deeper conversation or a response of a practical resolution or change in our life.

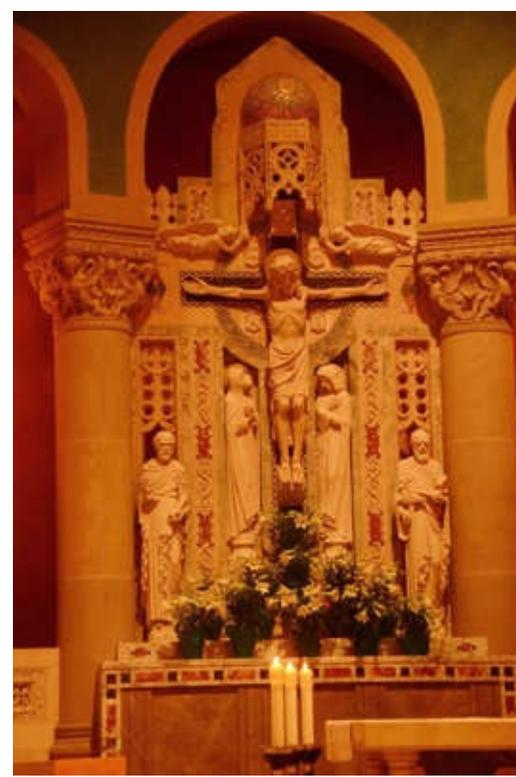
Our retreat was held on the feast day of St Francis de Sales and so we were also able to learn more about his life and pray to him during our morning prayers and Mass. My favorite quote from St Francis de Sales is the following:

"Accept the duties which come upon you quietly, and try to fulfill them methodically, one after another. If you attempt to do everything at once, or with confusion, you will only cumber yourself with your own exertions, and by dint of perplexing your mind you will probably be overwhelmed and accomplish nothing."

I think that this quote helps us greatly as Catholic mothers to realize that we need to pray about our vocations and accept and receive what God is giving to us in the gift of our families and respond with grace and love. God is the ultimate redeemer and when we act like we have it all together we are not able to truly let Him in. It is in those messiest places in our lives and heart where Jesus's response can be the most glorious! Sometimes we do not feel like we are receiving a response to our prayer, but God only asks us to wait when he has something amazing planned in our lives.

God is there and present in each day and in each part of our lives. Now it is up to us to give Him the space he needs and to truly receive the gift that God is. God wants to provide and protect that space in our lives to draw closer to Him. The amazing thing is if we try today and do not get that intimate prayer time to fit in our day, God is just as available to us tomorrow as he was today. All we need to do is try again. There are many responsibilities that can overwhelm us in our daily lives between loving our spouses, caring for our children, tending to our homes, making meals, giving to our community but the only thing that we really need to accomplish in each day is receiving God. He is there, all around us, and through daily prayer if we take time to acknowledge, relate, receive and respond to Him I think we would all see remarkable gifts in each of our lives.

What do you do to fit time in your day for prayer and to deepen your relationship with God? How do you best receive God? Let us pray for each other as we also draw closer to Him.



This contribution is available at <http://childrenofthechurch.blogspot.com/2015/01/deepening-our-prayer-lives.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Our Imperfect Marriages [at In Caritas Christiana]

4th Week in Ordinary Time

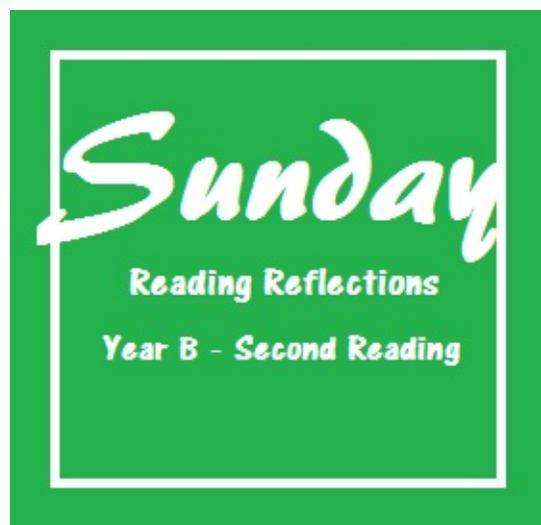


This Sunday, the second reading will be from 1 Cor 7:32-35. This reading is in sequence from last week's epistle reading.

So,

[last week](#)

, Paul counseled the church in Corinth on the need for detachment from this world. This advice was given in the midst of his instruction for widows, virgins, and married people.



In this week's reading, he zeroes in on one possible problem for those in married life. Paul leads off this passage by asserting that he desire that his brothers and sisters in Christ can be free of anxiety. What does this really mean?

Dictionary.com defines anxiety (in non-clinical context) in this way:

1. distress or uneasiness of mind caused by fear of danger or misfortune
2. earnest but tense desire; eagerness

I think that both of these definitely apply to married life, though perhaps not in this order. I'd like to focus on the second definition.

Consider how one acts in a new relationship (either when you're still dating, or when you're newly married). How did you act toward your husband (or wife) in the early days? I'd be willing to bet that you were anxious to please them? Any little gift - breakfast in bed, the last chicken finger in the box, that [whatever-it-was] that they just had to have - you watched them very carefully to make sure it was everything they hoped for.

Now, there's nothing intrinsically wrong with this. Marriage is a vocation of service. I

should

want to serve my husband, to do for him, to make him happy; I should desire that he continue to be refined to more perfectly resemble the image and likeness of God. And he should want to do the same for me.

Paul's point is that because we are finite creatures, this eagerness that we have to please our husbands does take away from the energy we are able to put into serving Christ. We can only do so much before we collapse from exhaustion. We who are married are, in a word, "divided".

This is not so much a fault as it is a fact of life. In married life, we do what is called for by our vocation. Paul says that there isn't anything wrong with married life. Earlier in the chapter, Paul says that those who are married shouldn't seek to be single, and he says that a person who marries commits no sin by doing so.

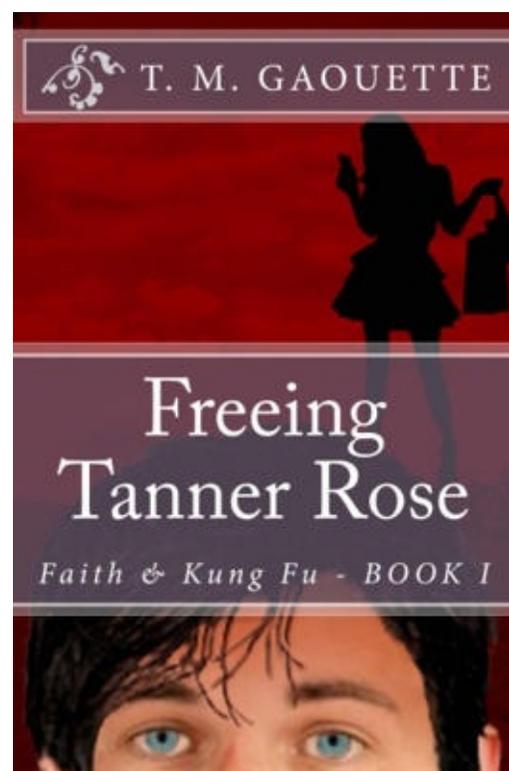
We, being fallen creatures, will not live our vocation perfectly, we will love inadequately (neglect), incorrectly (lust), or to excess (idolatry), but we are, each of us, called to love our spouses in the way that Christ loved his church - perfectly. And we are to desire one another's spiritual perfection.

Let's pray that God will open the eyes of our heart to show us the ways in which our love for our spouses is not in line with his plan for us. Let us also pray that he will provide for us a course correction, so that our marriages will more perfectly reflect the plan he has for our lives and what is in store for us in eternity.

This contribution is available at <http://incaritaschristiana.blogspot.com/2015/01/our-imperfect-marriages.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Freeing Tanner Rose by T. M. Gaouette [at The Koala Bear Writer]



I wouldn't have put faith and kung fu together, but that's exactly what author T. M. Gaouette does in her YA series *Faith & Kung Fu*. Gaouette clearly knows both well, as she weaves them into the novels in a way that neither preaches nor bores.

In *Freeing Tanner Rose*, the first book in the series, Tanner Rose is a 14-year-old Hollywood actress high on her own fame. At fourteen, she's already starred in several movies and is set to begin work on a TV series. Then her mother decides that her partying lifestyle may ruin her career and banishes her to a friend's farm. That's where Tanner meets Gabriel, a 16-year-old homeschooled guy who is serious about two things: faith and kung fu.

Tanner can't understand Gabriel's simple lifestyle, and Tanner's stuck-up selfishness soon annoys Gabriel. Watching her struggle with her addictions brings back memories of dealing with his father's drunkenness. But when Tanner hits rock bottom, it's Gabriel's steadiness that keeps her from falling apart again. Slowly, a friendship grows between them... until Tanner faces the ultimate challenge as she returns to Hollywood.

One thing I loved about *Freeing Tanner Rose* was the characters. Tanner and Gabriel are so real. Gaouette has a knack for dialogue and I could totally hear Tanner's voice as she rolls her eyes at Gabriel or gushes about going shopping. Gaouette's descriptions also made it easy to picture the places that Gabriel and Tanner are, whether it was camping in the woods, partying at a hotel, competing at a kung fu match, or posing for a promotional photo shoot.

I also appreciated the way Gaouette wove faith through the novel. Gabriel's belief system and chaste

lifestyle is completely foreign to Tanner, yet he (and his mom) never preach at her. They simply live their faith and answer Tanner's questions when she comes to them seeking help. While Gabriel and his mom are Catholic, the novel should appeal to a wider Christian audience as the Catholic elements are few—a simple mention of Mass or a priest rather than church or a pastor.

However, I wish Gaouette had hired an editor before publishing her book. There were grammatical mistakes throughout the novel which annoyed me as a reader. Point of view switches within paragraphs also made it harder to get into one character's head. I do realize that I'm a bit of a grammar geek, with a lot of English and writing classes under my belt, so Gaouette's target audience will likely skim over this without noticing it.

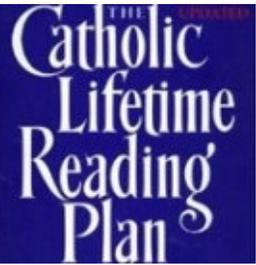
T. M. Gaouette is a freelance writer, blogger and novelist. She was born in Africa, raised in London, and now lives in the United States with her husband and four children. *Freeing Tanner Rose* is her second novel. To find out more about her and her books, including recent reviews, [drop by her blog](#).



This contribution is available at <http://www.thekoalabearwriter.com/2015/01/freeing-tanner-rose-t-m-gaouette/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Fr John Hardon's Catholic Lifetime Reading Plan [at Blog of a Country Priest]



Father John Hardon SJ, Servant of God, 1914-2000, was a great man. With parents like his, it's no wonder.

When he was still an infant, his father, who was a construction worker, was killed in a workplace accident. He apparently sacrificed his own life to save the lives of his colleagues.

To honour her husband's memory, and the heroism of his death, Mrs Hardon resolved she would never remarry. So she scrimped and saved and struggled to support herself and her young son. As often happens, material poverty and solid faith produced spiritual riches.

Fr Hardon's earliest memory is accompanying his mother on all-night vigils before the Blessed Sacrament. He would be tucked up, asleep on a pew, and wake occasionally to find his mother always in the same position — kneeling next to him, head bowed in adoration, deep in prayer.

Some Lutheran schoolgirls boarded with the Hardons, which provided some income. When he was still young, John demanded to know *why they* got to eat meat on Friday, and he did not. Mrs Hardon discreetly raised the issue with the girls and their parents. The girls would have to adopt the Catholic practice, or find somewhere else to live. The girls wished to stay, and their parents agreed. The girls were like sisters to John, whom he loved and admired. He attributed his early positive exposure to the Lutheran faith to a lifelong interest in ecumenism, long before it was mainstream.

After his ordination, he was sent to Rome to study theology, and he became an expert in Protestantism and in the oriental religions. Fr Hardon was a hard worker, a clear thinker, and a brilliant one at that. From what I've read, it could be fair to say that he is the English-speaking world's answer to Joseph Ratzinger. By that I mean: Pope Benedict is the greatest theologian alive today, and the outstanding Catholic thinker of his generation. What can be said of Ratzinger at a universal level, may be said of Fr Hardon in the smaller pond of the Anglosphere.



Fr John Hardon SJ, Servant of God

Unfortunately, Fr Hardon was a casualty of the culture wars which raged throughout the post-conciliar Church. He was deemed to be too conservative and divisive by his superiors, banned from teaching, and effectively exiled. (That happened to many Jesuits in the 80s and 90s. Pope Francis suffered a similar fate in the decade following his term as Argentine superior general. It was only his episcopal appointment which lifted him from obscurity.) Nonetheless, Fr Hardon's marginalisation in America didn't inhibit fruitful collaboration with three popes.

With Pope Paul VI, Fr Hardon produced *The Catholic Catechism* (1975), which was the normative English-language catechetical text until the Holy See produced a definitive *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in 1992. (Fr Hardon contributed to that project too.) When Pope John Paul II asked Mother Teresa to expand her ministry to the poor to include catechesis and evangelisation, he referred her to Cardinal Ratzinger. Ratzinger, in turn, referred Mother Teresa to Fr Hardon, who worked closely with the Missionaries of Charity for many years, developing catechetical means which are still in use.

Apart from his scholarly virtues, Fr Hardon was by all accounts a holy priest. He had a deep devotion to the Blessed Sacrament, which isn't surprising in view of his mother's example. He was widely sought to lead retreats, hear confessions, and minister spiritual direction. His cause for canonisation was opened in 2005.

Fr Hardon's scholarship, his catechetical expertise, and his interior life conspire to recommend, I think, his *Catholic Lifetime Reading Plan* ([Amazon listing](#)). This book-length plan was published in 1989, and it's not so much a list of *books* as it is a list of 104 *authors* he recommends Catholics read.

I ordered this book several weeks ago, but I'm still waiting. I'm looking forward to learning *why* Fr Hardon recommends the authors he lists. He profiles each author in two or three pages, and includes their most recommended writing. Apparently the book also includes an exhaustive bibliography, with the details of *all* the significant works of each author. In the meantime, I've made do with the bare bones: names of the authors and the books Fr Hardon especially recommends.

[You can download the document](#), or read it online:

- [Jonathan Aquino has blogged a very short profile of each work.](#)
- I can't vouch for the historical categories of authors. These are Fr Hardon's categories, but I've had

to guess where they fit. For example, I presumed that Fr Hardon numbered St Thomas More as the last of the medievals, and St Ignatius Loyola as the first of the Counter-Reformation authors. But until I receive my copy of *The Catholic Lifetime Reading Plan*, I can't corroborate that.

- The green authors and titles are cross-reference to an alternative Catholic lifetime reading plan I'll post tomorrow.
- Some of the titles are accompanied with a book symbol. This annotates a novel! (See yesterday's post: [The thrilling romance of orthodoxy.](#))

This contribution is available at <http://www.acountrypriest.com/john-hardons-catholic-lifetime-reading-plan/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Grace-filled Tuesdays (Book Club "Meeting" 1) [at String of Pearls]

Well, several months ago I said that there was going to be

[a book club here at String of Pearls](#)

and that it was going to start in early 2015. So...I think it's about time I got going on that.

Since my first novel is titled

Finding Grace

, I thought I'd use

"Tuesday's child is full of grace"

(a line from an old nursery rhyme that begins "Monday's child is fair of face") as inspiration for the name of the club, as well as the day of the week on which it will be held. (BTW--thanks to those who voted when I asked what your favorite names for the club would be.) I will use this book club to discuss

Erin's Ring

as well

,

which has no character named Grace in it, but is also--I hope--full of grace for the reader.

Okay, where to start? Well, I'm just spit-balling here...but I thought I'd point out some things that both of my novels,

Finding Grace

and

Erin's Ring

, contain

(and I don't think I've included any true spoilers here, but it might be better to join the club after you've read the books

).

1. A family with lots of boys in it

(five Kelly brothers in

FG

, four McCormick brothers in

ER

--and who knows, maybe that baby Ellie McCormick is carrying is another son?). Hmm...wonder why?



2. A minor character named Harding,

which happens to be my maiden name (the kindly pharmacist in

FG

, the kindly English landlord in

ER

).

3. Lots and lots o' Irish characters!

Folks with names like Kelly, Foley, McCormick, O'Brien, Finnegan, Kennedy, McQuinn...if you're a sucker for an Irishman, you just might like my books. (My mom's maiden name is Kelly; and my husband is just about 100% Irish, on both sides--I never thought the last name Pearl sounded all that Irish, but turns out

[it is](#)

.)

4. Men who are carpenters

(Abe Perlmann in

FG

, Tommy McQuinn and Dan McCormick in

ER

), with comparisons to St. Joseph the carpenter. My husband, you might be shocked--shocked!--to know, is also a skilled furniture-maker and woodworker.



5. Pearls

(Peggy Kelly's trademark necklace in

FG

, the strand that holds Mrs. Driscoll's eyeglasses in

ER

). Pearls are my favorite jewels, as you might have guessed.

6. Reminders of Mary's role as a Mediatrix, along with characters who pray the Rosary.

The daily Rosary has been a part of our life for many years, and we are devoted to Mary, our Mother.

7. An important male character with many of my husband's attributes

--physical and otherwise (Tom Buckley, the handsome, gap-toothed love interest in

FG

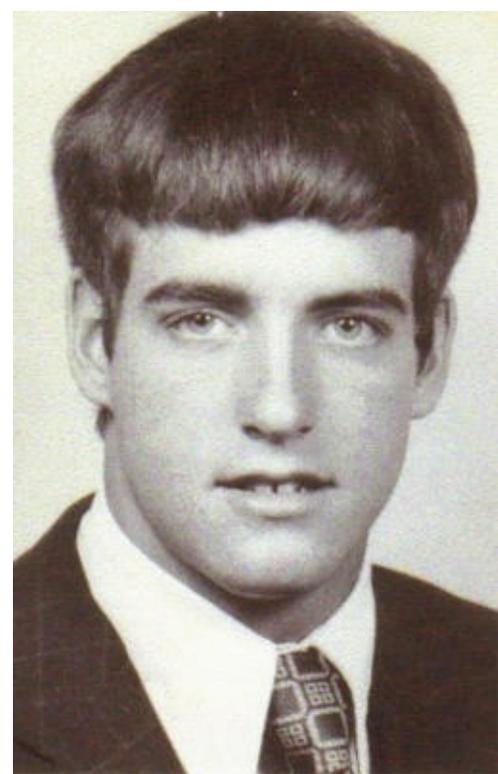
, and Dan McCormick, the airline pilot/devoted husband and father in

ER

--and when I wrote about Seamus Finnegan in

ER

, it was my husband's face I pictured). I read an interview once where an author admitted that even after many years as a writer, her husband still got a little jealous of her male characters. I could never create a love interest for my female characters who didn't have at least a passing resemblance to my guy, so I don't think that's going to happen in our house!

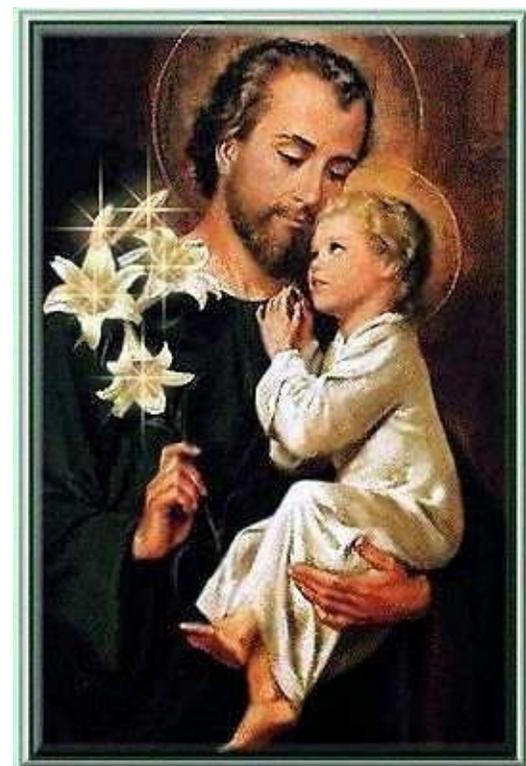


8. Allusions to St. Joseph (see #3

), the patron saint of families (and to whom we Pearls pray, with utmost confidence, for special intentions regarding our various family members--especially the powerful prayer called "The Unfailing Petition to St. Joseph," which was included in

ER

).



9. Information about our dear friends in Heaven, the saints

(there is a lot more of this in

FG

than in

ER

; but even in the much shorter

ER

, the reader learns for whom Saint Aloysius is the patron).



10. A climactic scene involving the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

I can rarely receive the graces of this sacrament without tears, always humbled by God's endless capacity for mercy and love. It has the awesome power to heal and console, so I think it is fitting that when my characters have major struggles in their lives, they wind up in the confessional unloading their burdens before God, aided by a holy and compassionate priest.

During some recent airline travels, I started reading a work of fiction wherein the main character is a young woman who pretty much lives to read--she's a quiet type who works in a bookstore and always has a novel going. I find this sort of character in a lot of the novels I read. And it hit me that many people who write novels create characters who are avid readers (and often writers) like themselves. My sweet bookworm Grace fits this bill, always alluding to Mr. Darcy and other favorite characters from her favorite books--and hey, it just so happens that all of her favorite works of literature are mine, too! Who would have guessed? But with

Erin's Ring

I actually managed to create two young female characters who aren't obsessed with reading, like I am. However, Molly McCormick loves learning about history and combing her grandmother's attic for treasures from times gone by...and boy oh boy, does that ever sound like a girl I know very well. (Can writers ever really separate themselves entirely from the characters they bring to life?)

Okay then, that's a good start--don't you think?

If you're reading this, and you've read both of my novels, can you think of any other similarities between

the two? Or do you just have a question you'd like to ask me? Leave me a comment, I'd love to hear from you! And I will respond--that's a promise.

This contribution is available at <http://mumsie2five.blogspot.com/2015/02/grace-filled-tuesdays-book-club-meeting.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Announcing Marriage Rx: Our New Marriage Advice Series on CatholicMom [at Can We Cana?]



I'm thrilled to announce **Marriage Rx**, a new monthly marriage advice column from me and my husband, Catholic psychiatrist Dr. Manuel P. Santos! It will appear monthly on CatholicMom.com on the fourth Monday. I'll also repost here on the Can We Cana? blog. My husband and I have already received lots comments and questions to feature in future columns. Please keep them coming!

How Marriage Rx Can Help You

Most marriages encounter bumps and trouble spots along the way. But Catholics don't view marriage as disposable. We want to fix our marriage, not throw it away. If you're looking for Catholic marriage advice from someone who understands the powerful and healing graces of the Sacrament of Matrimony, Marriage Rx can give you answers that will truly help.

It's anonymous. When you submit questions, you don't have to use your full name, or even your real name. Just email us at catholicmarriagerx@gmail.com and look for the answer in an upcoming column.

It's free. You don't have to buy a book or attend an expensive therapy session. Asking us a question is all you have to do!

Who Writes Marriage Rx?

Dr. Santos and his wife Karee, the column's co-authors, have been married fourteen years and have six beautiful children. They began teaching marriage preparation classes together in New York City in 2003. Their Catholic marriage help book will be released by Ave Maria Press in 2016.

Dr. Santos is a psychiatrist who has been helping Catholic and non-Catholic couples over rough spots in their relationships for almost fifteen years. In Dr. Santos' psychiatric practice, he has brought healing to those who have suffered depression as a result of the abortion of their child and to those struggling to break free from addictions to pornography or serial adultery. He has counseled couples who are negatively impacted by sexual misconceptions and neuroses and haunted by specters of past sexual abuse.

Dr. Santos also serves as a resource for the Marriage Tribunal of the Archdiocese of New York in determining whether there are mental health grounds for granting petitions for annulment. He is a member of the Sexual Abuse Review Board for the Prelature of the Holy Cross and Opus Dei, and in addition belongs to the Catholic Medical Association, CatholicTherapists.com, and the Society of Catholic Social Scientists.

Karee Santos graduated from law school at age 21 and practiced law for nearly 10 years in New York City before giving it up to stay home and raise her children. She has worked as a freelance journalist for the *National Catholic Register* and *Aleteia*. She also writes for the Catholic Match Institute, the blog of CatholicMatch.com, as well as her personal blog – Can We Cana? – and various other places around the web. She recently hosted a successful series of four marriage enrichment webinars.

What Topics Will Marriage Rx Cover?

All questions are welcome. We want to know what *you* would like to hear about most:

- Financial struggles
- Work/Life balance
- Parenting disagreements
- Religious differences
- Unemployment or ill health
- Sexual issues regarding anything from periodic abstinence to serial infidelity
- Addictions to pornography, alcohol or other substances

What is most important to you? Respond in the comments below or email us privately at catholicmarriagerx@gmail.com. We look forward to hearing from you!

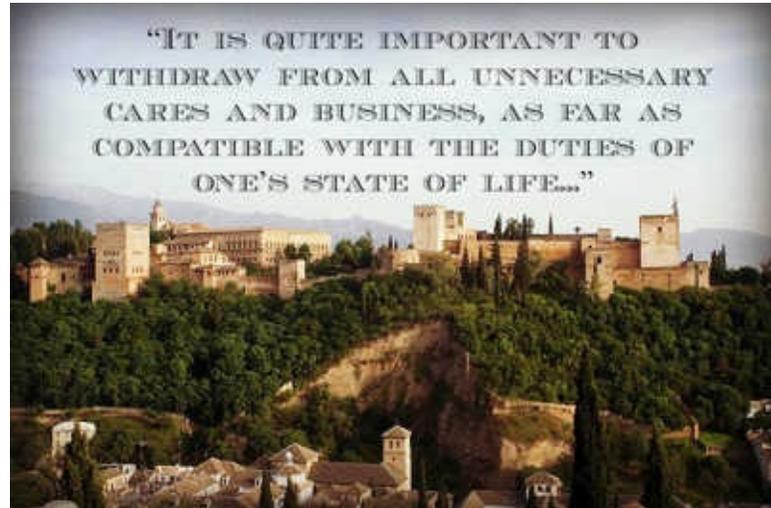
This contribution is available at <http://canwecana.blogspot.com/2015/02/announcing-marriage-rx-our-new-marriage.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Inadequate mothering. Nell over at Whole Parenting Family wrote a piece about just that. I was so inspired by her gentle words and encouragement to make peace where we are in our journey. In the [post](#), she talks about her mind palace which led me to thinking about the mansions of the [Interior Castle by St. Teresa of Avila](#).

Interior Castle is a guide through the stages of spiritual development in the description of each level being a mansion in the castle of our soul. I found a handy [little chart](#) online from [Contemplative Homeschool](#); I highly suggest clicking over to look at it. While I was studying the chart, I began to see how St. Teresa's mansions are applicable to more than just my prayer life. They are also applicable to developing my emotional/spiritual maturity in regards to being a mother.

"IT IS QUITE IMPORTANT TO
WITHDRAW FROM ALL UNNECESSARY
CARES AND BUSINESS, AS FAR AS
COMPATIBLE WITH THE DUTIES OF
ONE'S STATE OF LIFE..."



The first mansion describes our souls as clinging to the world and its affairs. We have tuned God out in order to listen to the world. As mothers and women of the world, we can allow the outside obligations take hold of our schedules. Social functions, car pools, soccer games, extracurricular activities, etc. need to be prioritized according to what our household needs not wants. Being busy can create barriers to communicating with our children and can create snapping points when we are late or overtaxed. There are only so many hours in the day. We can't improve in our vocations as mothers unless we spend time "in" our vocation. I am guilty of daydreaming or list making while a little one is telling me a story or explaining a creation. There are times where I barely listen, and the child can sense that. I want that to change. I want to give undivided attention to each child each day. Obviously, undivided attention can't be given at every moment. But I could stop folding towels long enough to hear a story.

The first mansion also talks of the lack of humility and self-knowledge. Very few people master a task at first go; it takes time, study, and patience to excel. Repetition which I loathe fills our days as mothers. There are always booters to wipe, dishes to clean, meals to cook, clothes to wash, that one princess book to read 145 million times, and other daily tasks that never cease. All that repetition is building our mental and physical selves. It is training us in fortitude. It is training us to find our own interior cell where God awaits us. Cleaning the toilet is not below me neither is raising up a little soul. Each task whether enjoyable or not is a moment for growth. In that moment, we find our true worth and that is what humility is.

Oh, self knowledge. Such a double-edged sword. On the right hand, it greatly benefits us to know our true value leading us towards humility. On the left hand, it can be a cause for pride or insecurity or even

denial. Keeping mental stock of the true state of where we are not where we want to be is really important. Pride is a sin that I greatly wrestle with in life; I take everything personally especially in regards to the food I cook. I can throw some serious, ahem, temper tantrums over Jeff and the chickadees not liking what I prepare. I have a natural confidence in my abilities that can lead me to be a control freak or having really exacting standards. Overall, I am a total [INTJ](#). If allowed, I could give [House](#) a run for his money. But I have a pretty awesome Wilson (she's the reason I'll internationally traveling! Woot-Woot) and Cuddy (Jeff has fantastic calves) that keep me on the ground.



Marking the seventh mansion is spiritual marriage and transforming union with Christ. The only person I can think of that has experienced this on a mothering level would be Our Blessed Mother, Mary. She is the perfect mother not only to Christ but to all of us. She comforts; she forgives; she unknots our tangled web of life from our predilection for sin. She probably never threw a temper tantrum of toddler Jesus not eating his evening meal.

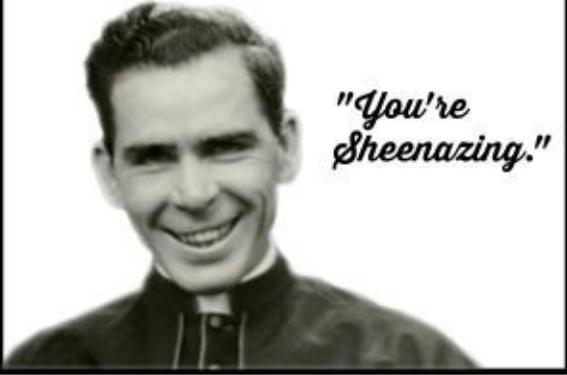
With that in mind, yes, all of our mothering will be inadequate. We are not Mary immaculately conceived. However, through prayer, sacrifices, and sufferings we can gather Graces from Christ. These graces can extend over into our love for the little souls entrusted to us. Milk will still be spilt. Clothes mussed up. Carpet stained. And life will be overcome with crazy stress filled and perhaps sorrowful moments. But Grace that is answer.

Thankfully, Mary wants to intercede for us passing out the graces as her son, Jesus Christ, permits. She wants to envelop us in her mantle. So, when you and I just can't bear to fold that little shirt one more time or quiet our voice when the toddler has once again poured his own milk, think of Mama Mary. She wants to mother you bringing you ever closer to her son.

Guess What??

Between The Linens has been nominated along with some other fantastic blogs for the Sheenazing Awards in Best Lifestyle and Underappreciated ! Thank you all for the votes; the nomination alone has made my year! [Click on over to Bonnie's blog, A Knotted Life to vote for your favorites \(and maybe this here blog if you would be so kind\).](#)

**OFFICIAL NOMINEE
IN THE 2015
SHEENAZING AWARDS**



This contribution is available at <http://www.betweenlinens.com/mansions-and-mothering-some-wisdom-from-st-teresa-of-avila/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Prayer: 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time [at Fr. Ben's Biblical Blog]

. My response, “Grab the pew in front of you and hold on for dear life! Survive!” You young parents are called to bring your kids to Jesus and it is okay that your prayer at Mass is more of survival than deep contemplation because you are following Christ as a parent.

Third, pray at the same time, in the same way and in the same place. This is what successful pray-ers share in common, whatever their state of life or vocation. Again, this may look different for different people.

There are two daily forms of prayer that we can all incorporate into our individual or family lives. And they’re simple. The first is grace before meals. If you’re like me and you like food, you’re probably getting three meals a day. Thank God for each of these meals before you eat. Before I stuff my face with nachos and have a barley soda while watching the Superbowl, I better be sure to offer God thanks.

Also consider prayer to connect with your sleeping patterns. Each of us, unless you are a college student, goes to bed each night and wake up in the next morning. Offer to God a quick prayer when you get up—“Thank you, God, for another day and please help me today.” End your day with another—“Lord, I am grateful for x, y and z. Thanks.”

I have witnessed my best friend and his wife develop an inspiring tradition in his home. Part of their nighttime routine with their daughter is to pray together. This consisted of simple prayers of thanksgiving, intercession for their family and an Our Father. I was there when they began this when she was a baby—it was awesome to see them beginning to form their child in a rhythm of prayer even before she could understand.

If you do the above—pray before meals, when you wake up and when you go to bed, you will have prayed five times during the day. You are well on your way to establish a daily rhythm of praying.

Finally, I will leave you with a common phrase that holds deep wisdom for you and me: *the family that prays together stays together.*

This contribution is available at <http://frbensbible.blogspot.com/2015/02/prayer-4th-sunday-of-ordinary-time.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Let's Try Something New [at The Contemplative Catholic Convert]

It isn't the Catholics who preach hatred against Baptists and Pentecostals from the pulpit, but the Catholics who are preached against for the most part. At least that's what I've experienced in my lifetime. I've come to the conclusion that when we come together in the common desire for a deep relationship with Christ, when we look to Jesus and as you have written, treat one another with kindness and true Christian charity, we can let the Holy Spirit do the rest.

I don't know why some Christians who believe substantially what Catholics believe don't come into the Church. I grieve that these good people are deprived of the graces of the sacraments and the power of the sacred liturgy and I long for a perfect unity with them. However, I can see that they seem to have a purpose in the plan of God in their Gospel outreach and their emphasis on right relationship with God, their particular witness to others who wouldn't come near Catholics. So I chalk this up to one more mystery in how God works in today's world.

You are right about the Nicene Creed. But the creed clearly states "I believe in one, holy, Catholic and apostolic Church" and this is the sticking point for many.

May I say here that I wish you still lived in Springfield because I would like to study the Bible and talk of the Lord with you in an easy chair. It's next to impossible at this end of this diocese to find Catholics who really know their faith and the Bible and are really on fire for the Lord.

Actually, I don't think most Protestants preach hatred against Catholics. Mostly they warn their flock against what they (preachers) consider false teaching. Hatred is, I think, overused and, in this case, (generally speaking) incorrect.

I do agree that if we would focus on the things that we agree on we would learn we are not really that different in our devotion to Jesus. But that is the problem -- not many take the time to LISTEN to each other.

As for the Creed's statement, "One holy, catholic, and apostolic church" -- historically (dating to the 4th century councils) the word catholic was not capitalized. It was a small 'c' because the word means (in its original meaning) 'universal.'

As for Catholics who know their faith at your end of the diocese . . . it is a problem I think across the country. Maybe you can start and lead a women's Bible study, or a couple's study. I don't know your situation there, so perhaps that is not an option for you. But when my wife and I lived in WA we started a study in the home of one of the parishioners which lasted about 7 years. Unfortunately, things are not moving in that direction now that we live in GA. That's the primary reason I started that YouTube study. I have to do SOMETHING or I will explode, I think. ;-)

Inspiration [at Miss Em]

A friend I just met via the blogosphere asked me about my inspiration for blogging and it really got me thinking.

I started to blog when I was in a really bad place.

This blog came out of over a year of depression, an eating disorder and insomnia.

I have never been in such a bad place as I was when I started to blog (*until I started healing and that is hell all over again but I will blog about that another time.)

I would sit up at night and look at at the bay. The dark water. The colors of the lights. The ship, the bridge.

I just sat on our old tan leather couch, and begged God to do something, anything.

I wanted to be free. I wanted to be a normal person again.

I did not want to feel like this. I hated myself so much. But I would sit and look out at something so much greater than me.

I begged the Lord a lot. A lot of the time I thought he was ignoring me, or this was just my cross and he was never going to heal me.

I was so broken and done.

I was empty.

Out of that empty shell came words.

I was inspired by things and I wanted to write about them. I did not even know why but I knew I had something to say.

So I started to

[write](#)

looking back I can see that I have improved a lot.

I am also so grateful that I started at a time when I felt totally hopeless I discovered that I love to write. I have learned to dream, to be inspired, to try anything and to live life without limits.

I still remember that day and the girl I was then. I am so different from that girl three years ago.

I am no longer broken and hopeless but I still get ideas to write about all the time. Thoughts that just refuse to leave, words that beg to be written.

I keep writing for that reason because I have to, because I cannot stop and for another reason. So I will remember who I was and who I have become, so I will look back in awe and wonder at God's plan in my life.

Only God can use something like that for such great good.

I continue to write because everyday I am inspired. Words come and this is where I share them.

This contribution is available at <http://rediscoveringglory.blogspot.com/2015/01/inspiration.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Canticles: Nunc Dimittis (Canticle of Simeon) [at Breviary Hymns]



[Nunc Dimittis](#)

is the

[Canticle](#)

of

[Simeon](#)

from

[Luke 2:29-32](#)

. It takes its title from the opening line of the

[Latin Vulgate](#)

translation by

[St. Jerome](#)

: "Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine" (Now thou dost dismiss thy servant, O Lord). It has been traditionally sung at the conclusion of daily prayer since the 4th century. In the

Roman Breviary

it is sung at the end of Compline (Night Prayer). It is accompanied by an antiphon fitting for the liturgical season, such as the commonly sung: "Salva Nos Domine" featured in the following video:

Gregorian Chant

NUNC DIMITTIS (with Salva Nos Domine)

Antiphon:

Salva nos domine vigilantes,

custodi nos dormientes;

ut vigilemus cum Christo,

et requiescamus in pace.

Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine, secundum verbum tuum in pace:

Quia viderunt oculi mei salutare tuum

Quod parasti ante faciem omnium populorum:

Lumen ad revelationem gentium, et gloriam plebis tuae Israel.

Gloria Patri, et Filio, et Spiritui Sancto

Sicut erat in principio, et nunc, et semper,

et in sæcula sæculorum. Amen.

Contemporary English Version

CANTICLE OF SIMEON

Now dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, in peace, according to Thy word:

For mine own eyes hath seen Thy salvation,

Which Thou hast prepared in the sight of all the peoples,

A light to reveal Thee to the nations and the glory of Thy people Israel.

This contribution is available at <http://kpshaw.blogspot.com/2015/01/nunc-dimittis.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Love has to be Learnt



There is no accomplishment of any worth that you can attain merely by desiring to have it. Learning to master the greatest human accomplishment of all then, – learning to love is no exception. There may well be such a thing as love at first sight, but if this is not followed up by a lifetime of trying to love more fully, and more deeply in sickness and in health, then disaster will follow. The love at first sight that begins in flames will soon end in ashes. From rapture to routine, from routine to rapture. Learning to love God may end in flames, but it never begins there, that's why far fewer begin the journey.

It begins with a faith-filled conviction that there is no more important journey, not just because it leads a person to experience the love of God, but because it enables his love to surcharge and suffuse our weak human love. This enables us to love others as Christ loved others, especially that special other to whom we have dedicated our lives on earth and the family that we have raised together. Learning to love of whatever sort has to be learnt. Learning to love God through prayer then is like anything else, it takes time and it needs practice.

We think nothing of spending hours a day, and working for years to get a degree, pass an examination or attain qualifications. And we quite rightly accept as a matter of course that the time we give and the energy we expend is necessary. Somehow we seem to think that prayer is an exception, but believe me it is not. Like any form of learning, responding to God's love is initially difficult and burdensome, until, with continual practice, it becomes easier and easier until '*practice makes perfect*'. Practice eventually '*makes perfect*' because as we turn to God we enable him to enter into us, permeating our being with his being, fusing our loving with his.

When I was a student I was given the job of doing everyone else's washing. I was given an old mangle to help me, but it was so old and rusty that I had great difficulty in using it. Then a fellow student came to my aid with a can of oil. As I tried to turn the handle he poured the oil onto the cogs and gradually they began to turn with ever greater ease and facility. Now I could do everyone's washing with, if not pleasure, at least a measure of goodwill that had been absent before. The action of the oil symbolized for me the action of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

As a person tries to turn to God, the Holy Spirit enters into the process, gradually giving ever greater ease and facility to do what would be quite impossible without him. Now notice that I used the word 'tries' because we can do no more than try to turn to God. If we ever succeed it will be thanks to him. This is not only true of prayer but of everything else. The Jewish philosopher Simone Weil said '*a person is no more than the quality of their endeavor,*' that's how God will ultimately judge, not only how we have prayed, but how we have done everything else for that matter.

However the way we try is crucial. Initially I found it so hard trying to turn the handle of the mangle that I lost my temper with it. I was depending totally on my own efforts, going nowhere, until the oil came to my rescue. It's exactly the same with prayer; if we act as if everything depends on us then we will get nowhere. In prayer the way a person tries must demonstrate their deeply held conviction that success ultimately depends, not on their action, but on the action of God. If we find that we are getting angry it's because we think everything depends on us and it doesn't, it depends on God. When we have learnt this and the patience that humbly awaits upon his action, then he will begin to act within us like never before. That's why I like to qualify the word 'trying' with the word 'gently'. The word 'gently' describes the way we ought to try, in other words, in such a way that we know that without God's action entering into ours, failure will be inevitable. Harness these two words together and you have what I think is a perfect definition of prayer as – '*gently trying to turn and open the heart and mind to God*'.

Now in order to help a person keep turning away from distractions and back to God, Christian tradition has devised many different forms of prayer. There are no perfect means of prayer. There are just different means to help a person to keep turning and opening their heart to God. The important point to remember is that there is no magic formula, no infallible method or technique. There are just hundreds of different ways of prayer to do one and the same thing.

A means of prayer is good for you, if it helps you, here and now to keep turning your heart back to God. What might help you at the beginning of your spiritual journey may be of no use later on. What helps you in the morning might not help you in the evening. What helps you one minute might not help you the next. So please move from one method to another with complete freedom. Remember that these methods are only means. Beware of the here today and gone tomorrow gurus who have a fixation about a particular means of prayer which they enjoin upon everybody without question as a 'panacea'. They know nothing about the spiritual life. If they did they'd know that methods of prayer change as people change and as prayer develops with the years.

Remember the words of Dom John Chapman, '*Pray as you can, not as you can't*'. However the first Christians found that meditating on the sacred scriptures was the preferred means of launching them into prayer and this was also true of all the saints. Through the scriptures they came to know and love Jesus and in him and through him they came to experience the love of his Father. William of St-Thierry said the '*you will never love someone unless you know them, but you will never really know them unless you love them*'.

The more you come to know Jesus, the more you will love him and then, like all lovers, crave for union. But you cannot be united with the Jesus who once lived on this earth, for he no longer lives here as he did before. So this is the moment in the spiritual ascent when love draws you up and into him as he is now, as meditation leads you into contemplation, into contemplating him in his risen glory. Then in with and through him into the contemplation of God the Father and of the glorious love that endlessly revolves between him and his Son.

No matter what sort of prayer a person chooses, there will still always be distractions, so don't be discouraged. Let me reassure you by explaining the psychological dynamics that underpin all prayer no matter what form it takes. The journey into God can be described as a journey from selfishness to selflessness. Whenever you choose to turn away from any distraction you are in fact performing an act of selflessness. If you turn away from fifty distractions in fifteen minutes you are in effect performing fifty acts of selflessness. As the only way you can learn to become a more selfless person and therefore more open to love is by performing selfless actions, then prayer is a school for love. It is the school where the essence of loving is learnt, that opens you to receive God's love in return.

The logic of this is such that even an Atheist should be able to appreciate the importance of putting aside time for practising selflessness that can alone make them into a perfect human being. It is only by practising selflessness that a person is open to receive the love that will alone make them fully human, whether it comes directly from God or from anyone else. A saint is just a word used to describe a man or a woman who possesses a quality of love denied to the rest of us. When we say that they are invariably men and women of prayer we are merely saying they must have spent years practising the selflessness that opens them to love – the love of God.

So you see, if you didn't have distractions in your prayer you couldn't practise the one indispensable ingredient that can open you to receive what you yearn for more than anything else. That's why St Teresa of Avila said, you can't really pray without distractions and she knew a thing or two about prayer.

That's consoling for all of us isn't it?

This contribution is available at <http://blog.davidtorkington.com/love-learnt/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

7 Ideas for Giving Your Children a Vocations' Mindset [at Saints 365]



I'm honored to be participating in a blog series hosted by Gina over at

[Someday Saints](#)

which is focused on vocations and how Catholic families can foster vocations within their domestic churches. Stop by

[Someday Saints](#) **1. Talk. talk. talk.**

In our family, talk of vocations, and the idea of God having a plan for our lives comes up regularly. Whenever we have discussions with our children about their futures, we always add the disclaimer:..."if that is God's plan for your life." Our lives are not our own and every baptized Christian is called to a vocation. We pray that by constantly keeping the "vocation conversation" open that our children will not view a vocation as a foreign concept or a way of life that is "for someone else". Our desire above all else is to teach them to seek God's will in their life - wherever he leads them.

2. Pray. pray. pray.



KEEP CALM
AND
PRAY FOR
VOCATIONS

SAINTS365.BLOGSPOT.COM

3. Utilize resources about vocations to teach your children.

There are so many wonderful resources to expose children to the possibility of a call to priesthood or religious life. Here are a few of my favorites:

- Our family really enjoyed the book by Elizabeth Fiocelli: [Where Do Priests Come From?](#) This book, and its companion books: [Where Do Sisters Come From?](#) provide a wonderful description of how vocations are drawn from ordinary people who grew up in ordinary families. These books are perfect for a read-aloud in a classroom setting at CCD or during a children's ministry and are a great introduction to vocations for children who have had little personal contact with a priest or sister.



- Purchase a Mass kit for your sons - a dear friend of mine bought one for my son when he was two years old and he regularly "said Mass" for us for many years. This one, [My Mass Kit](#), available at Amazon, is just adorable and a great way to give your sons the opportunity to pretend to be a priest. I cannot tell you how many priests our family has met who have shared stories of pretending to say Mass when they were children.
- I love the [Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist's Facebook page](#) - the joy on these sister's faces as they go about their daily work is so evident and contagious that viewing their daily updates always give me a shot in the arm and a conviction that the joy of the Lord needs to be my strength as well! Let your kids view their status updates as well!
- Father Robert Barron's video ["Heroic Priesthood"](#) is a powerful short video highlighting the experience of the seminarians at Mundelein Seminary through the lens of a basketball game. I recently played it for a group of 11 year olds at our homeschool co-op and I can tell you that the kids were absolutely riveted - you could have heard a pin drop. Many of the children went home and ask their parents to watch the video again.

4. Encourage an attitude of service in your children.

Every Christian vocation, whether it is to the priesthood, religious life or marriage demands and attitude of self-giving and service. In a world that is extremely self-centered, where pleasure and instant gratification is the name of the game, it can be a challenge to foster an attitude of service in our children. However, our family has found that the more we encourage our children to serve others, the greater their desire to serve becomes. It truly does feel good to do good. An attitude of service does not require remarkable feats of heroism - we don't need to go off to the mission fields to cultivate selfless giving in our kids - simply encouraging them to help out around the house, be aware of a friend or family member in need, and to be open to service opportunities in our parish is probably enough to begin to sow the seeds of a service-oriented life. We have found that when asking our children to serve others, it is necessary for us to vocally make the connection about why we are serving to them - out of love of God and love of neighbor. It is important that children are taught that our service flows from our love of the Lord.

May families be
"animated by the spirit of
faith and love and by the
sense of duty"
which is capable of
helping children to
welcome generously
the call to priesthood
and to religious life.

POPE BENEDICT XVI

5. Get to know your parish priest.

My brother is a diocesan priest and both my husband and I work for the church, so having priests at the dinner table is something my children have experienced to from birth. This exposure to the clergy in a "non-church" atmosphere give them the opportunity to see that God calls real people to the priesthood - Mets' fans, golfers, motorcycle riders (much to my chagrin), budding chefs, guitarists, intellectuals are more. Having clergy involved in our day to day lives allows the children to ask questions about their vocations, and other religious topics. It also gives us an appreciation of some of the struggles and challenges our priests face.

Don't be intimidated to invite your parish priest over to dinner and get to know them. Every priest - dinner guest we have ever had has been immensely grateful for the invitation. I often worry that we are

[bothering Father](#)

, but the reality is, most priests we know are delighted to share a meal as well as their stories and their faith with an interested family.

6. Attend Ordinations.

Attending family weddings was one of the highlights of my childhood - I loved all the festivities that went with these joyous occasions and they served to highlight the importance of marriage for me. I did not, however, have an opportunity to attend an Ordination until my own brother was ordained a priest when I was 33 years old. My brother's ordination to priesthood was a powerful and joyous occasion for my family and I have never forgotten the sense of awe that I had at the gift and mystery of the priesthood after witnessing his ordination. My husband and I have been blessed to take our children to two

[transitional diaconate ordinations](#)

and are looking forward to attending a priesthood ordination for a man they have known since they were babies this June. The beautiful rite of Ordination and the sense of camaraderie among the priests present provides a great opportunity plant the seeds of vocations in our children.

Many dioceses encourage the faithful to attend Ordinations to the priesthood,, transitional diaconate and permanent diaconate - check your Diocese's website or give them a call to find out if you are able to attend - not only will your family be blessed by the experience - it is a great encouragement to the men being ordained to see the support of the community.

7. Enlist the help of the saints.

Last, but certainly not least, ask for the intercession of the saints to foster vocations in your children. Some of our family favorites are St. John Vianney, who is the patron saint of all priests; St. Padre Pio, whose tireless ministry in the confessional is a great testimony to the power of the priesthood; St. Teresa of Avila, whose commitment to prayer and the interior life is so key for any vocation; and St. Therese of Lisieux, whose "little way" of love and service is a goal that can be understood and lived out by even the smallest child.

Please share your ideas in the comments box for fostering vocations in your family. Don't forget to

stop by [Someday Saints](#) and visit the other entries in the *Vocations Blog Hop*!

This post contains Amazon Affiliate Links - which basically means that if you purchase anything through

the link our Domestic Church will receive a small commission - we appreciate the support!

This contribution is available at <http://saints365.blogspot.com/2015/01/7-vocationideas.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Guiding Our Children to Discover Their Vocation [at Every Home a Monastery]



We all know there is a vocations crisis in the Church. We have a shortage of priests, deacons, and religious. Fewer people than ever want to get married or stay married (I would also add, there is a shortage of single people who are living out holy lives).

To add to the problem, there is a lot of talk about discerning one's vocation that can be confusing to young people. Some are waiting for a sign—some great experience that will leave them without a doubt as to God's calling in their lives. Others feel they must follow a certain path because they have been told it is the "holier" path or feel pressured to fill the void of certain vocations. All of this can leave a young adult confused and frustrated. With younger children, they change their mind so often they are not in a position to make serious life decisions yet. For parents wanting to help their children to find God's will for their lives all of this can be worrisome and leave a parent wondering what to say and how to help.

Helping your children to choose a vocation doesn't have to be complex. I firmly believe we have complicated something which is very simple. Simple—not easy, but simple.

The gospel message is one of simplicity. Jesus Christ said, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it; and whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel's will save it." (Mark 8:34-35) He also said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (Matthew 22:37-39)

Love of God, love of neighbor, denying ourselves daily by carrying our cross and following our Lord. Simple-not easy. Whichever vocation is chosen will be the way our Lord's words are answered. The true beginning of fulfilling our Lord's command began on the day of baptism, when the old man died and the new one rose out of the waters and put on Christ. And this is what can take a complex situation about vocations and make it simple again. Let's focus on teaching our children to answer their baptismal calling instead of finding their vocation.

If we teach our children, (or more importantly, show them by our own example) that every Christian belongs completely to God—every Christian is called to be a saint, then whichever vocation they choose when they are old enough will simply be an extension of the life they have already been living in Christ. It will not be some grand new journey, or some complete turn around and change of their lives, but a continuing in growing in love of God and neighbor, a continuing of carrying a daily cross and following

the Lord. Yes, there will be changes in how they do these things, but these self-denying acts and growth in holiness will not be new and will not likely be culminated in some radical life changing events.

Helping our children to discern their vocations will be made so much easier if we are teaching them to strive after sanctity from their birth; if we are raising them in holy homes—homes filled with love, prayer, and sacrifice; teaching them about the [royal priesthood of all believers](#) (1 Peter 2:9). I tell my own children that it does not matter which vocation they choose. They should seek where they will find the most joy in life and know whichever vocation they pick; the same thing is expected of them—to live their lives for God and His people. They are called to be saints and nothing less.

It is very important to have good people around our children to influence them in positive ways. My children have attended liturgical services at a monastery for most of their lives. We have been blessed with a wonderful community of Christians. My children have seen examples of good priests, good deacons, Christian marriages, single people living holy lives, and monks and nuns striving after sanctity. The many different ways a Christian can live are shown to them by example and the different vocations are familiar to them. I am very grateful for this and trust that my children will never have false ideals about any of the vocations in the Church. They have seen the different struggles and will know that no vocation makes something “magical” happen to you; the struggle for holiness is the same for everyone.

This is why community is so very important. We need one another in order to really be Christians. We need one another to grow. Children need to see Christians strive after holy lives, they need to see Christians fail but get up and try again. They need to witness real love of God and neighbor so they too can learn to love. The example of their own parents and their home life is the greatest influence of course, but an extended community is also very important.

Building these communities takes work. And this work is the work of our salvation. Children growing up in an environment of committed Christians who try to serve God and one another will have a life-long source of inspiration to draw from. When our children grow up and leave the nest they should be prepared to serve God and others; they should know how to deny themselves; they should know what is being asked of them as Christians because it has been asked of them their entire lives. They should know that regardless of what others around them do or don't do, they must follow Christ daily.

I believe one of the greatest tragedies of the breaking down of the family is that it not only harms individual families but the larger community. This falling apart of the family extends to the extended family, the communities we live in, and into our church families. Pope Francis recently [commented on](#) the blessings of large Catholic families, saying “The sons and daughters of large families are more inclined to fraternal communion from early childhood. In a world that is frequently marred by selfishness, a large family is a school of solidarity and sharing; and these attitudes are of benefit to all society.” If our children do not learn these lessons at home and in their church communities, things will only be harder for them as adults. Becoming a nun will not make them holy, being selfless will. Ultimately the love, wisdom, and building up of our children will be the greatest gift we parents can give. Teaching them to live real Christian lives will be what aids them the most in the beginning of their chosen vocations and entire adult lives.

Whichever vocation our children choose will require them to live in community, to be a member of the body of Christ. Cooking for a spouse and children, working to support a family, feeding the hungry at a soup kitchen, or feeding the Eucharist to the church, each act involves self sacrifice, self denial. Washing dishes in a monastery isn't anymore appealing or holier than washing them in a regular home. Or rather,

washing dishes, regardless of where, has the potential to be a holy act. The work of living and dying is pretty much the same for us all. “All of you who have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.” The participation in Christ’s life, the participation in the life of the Church, in the sacraments, enables us to seek after and live holy lives. This is the guidance and wisdom our children need to learn. This will make simple the choosing of a vocation. Even if your children are already young adults and in need of guidance now, a simple returning to the heart of the gospel message can help to make things clearer. Also a reminder that Jesus Christ said, “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” God wants us to have joy; He wants to bless our lives. Whichever path is chosen in life, sacrifice will be involved and real joy will only last if our lives are lived for God.

Thankfully, we have the saints to lead us and guide us. There are no shortages of holy examples for any Christian looking for guidance; we just need to ask the saints for help; they are always eager to lead us to God. We need to help our children really know the saints; we need to help them to have a real deep relationship with God. If we succeed in guiding them to real love for God and neighbor and succeed in helping them to know how much they are loved, the next steps in their lives will be so much easier for them and us.

The so-called “vocation crisis” is really a baptismal crisis. Let us teach our children to live out their baptismal call, to live their lives in Christ, and when the time comes for them to marry, become priests, or choose any other vocation in the Church, it will simply be the next step in their growth in holiness.

This article was originally published at [Catholic Exchange](#).

This contribution is available at <http://www.everyhomeamonastery.com/guiding-our-children-to-discover-their-vocation/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Listening for God's Voice [at From the Pulpit of my Life]

God our Creator is love, and He made us for love. To each of us He gave the capability to be in a close and loving relationship with Him. This relationship of love is nourished by and grows through prayer. So, prayer is the most vital practice in one's spiritual life.

Let's look at our prayer time. When we are at prayer what is it like? Do we spend our time doing a lot of talking to God? Do we spend much time listening for God's voice? My guess is that we do a lot of talking and little, if any, listening.

The responsorial refrain for the 4th Sunday in Ordinary Time urges, "***If today you hear his voice; harden not your hearts.***" This implies that prayer would have to be a two-way street with a time for talking to God and a time for being quiet so as to listen to him.

Our deepest, most meaningful conversations with God happen in silence. Entering into silence often feels uncomfortable, like visiting an alien place. This is because we have adjusted to living in such a noisy milieu. We are bombarded with blaring tv's, strident music, ringing cell phones, the din of traffic. The list of aural disturbances goes on and on. So, entering into a prayerful listening mode means that first we have to disconnect from all unnecessary noise.

Having created a surrounding conducive to silent prayer, we might try a prayer form called ***meditation***. Catholic meditation is ***active***. We focus our mind and imagination to ponder on a specific Scripture passage, or on a spiritual scene, or on a religious image. Here are some suggestions. Choose a narrative passage from one of the gospels, like the story of Jesus healing the paralytic in Mark 2; or choose one of the 14 Stations of the Cross, such as Veronica wiping the face of Jesus; or hold a crucifix and consider Jesus' Passion.

After making the Sign of the Cross, and having asked for help from the Holy Spirit, we begin to imagine ourselves as part of the story or scene or object that we have chosen. We bring our senses into play. We can ask questions like, "What do I see? What can I hear? How do I feel?" Then might ask, "What did all this mean to the people of that time? What does it mean to me now?" The Holy Spirit, whom we have asked to help us, guides us in our reflections. We allow silent time to let everything sink in, to hear God's voice. He may have a surprise in store!

We end our meditation by thanking God for enlightening us and making His presence known. The Sign of the Cross is a good way to conclude our meditation time.

This contribution is available at <http://www.fromthepulpitofmylife.com/2015/01/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Friday Penance [at Convert Journal]



Every Friday

The modern Catholic Church in America has changed from customs and teaching of 50 years ago, often to its detriment. Not doctrine, of course, but in some important discipline, practices and traditions. This is not without harm to the Body of Christ. Friday penance is one such example.

What is penance?

Penance is an expression of repentance. It is a means to repair the temporal effects of sin, for us and in behalf of others, reducing the cleansing necessary in purgatory. For non-Catholics who may be reading this, it has nothing to do with *forgiveness*. Completely forgiven sins leave a trail of damage in their wake and in justice must be addressed (sooner or later).

Friday is set aside as a special day in remembrance of the suffering and death of our Lord. Practicing Friday penance reminds us of this, pleases God, brings us closer to Him and at least partially atones for the effects of sin. It is an act of humility, surrendering what we prefer (not to perform penance) to what God prefers. It is seeking and yielding to His will.

Penance can take several forms such as abstinence from things we like, fasting, prayers, or performing acts of charity. Friday penance has traditionally been abstinence from meat. If you already abstained from meat for some other reason (vegetarian, health, etc.) then some other form would be indicated.

Are we required to abstain from meat on Friday?

Friday penance is the universal norm of the Church.

That said, it saddens me to acknowledge that we Americans do not *have to* abstain from meat or perform any other act of penance on Friday. Many people therefore do not, give it no thought at all, or assume it was an outdated / unnecessary practice. That is a mistake.

How we got to this sad state of affairs is complicated. Canon law states:

Abstinence from eating meat or another food according to the prescriptions of the conference of

bishops is to be observed on Fridays throughout the year unless (nisi) they are solemnities; abstinence and fast are to be observed on Ash Wednesday and on the Friday of the Passion and Death of Our Lord Jesus Christ.

That seems clear enough in intent, requiring abstinence from meat unless the conference of bishops prescribe something else — which they presumably would do for good cause. The USCCB did this, but with complex wording, approved by Rome, which has the unfortunate effect of making Friday penance optional. For Americans, it is therefore not technically required and not a sin to ignore it. If you are interested in the legalities of this, Jimmy Akin has a good explanation [here](#) and [here](#).

Officially, the USCCB strongly urges us to abstain from meat or perform some other act of penance on Friday. This is for our own good and the good of Holy Mother Church. Unofficially, this is never spoken of. While converting, I never heard a peep about this. Subsequently, I never heard a peep about this in homilies, Diocesan newspapers, or any other official channel. Very few people seem to know of the USCCB's strong admonition to observe Friday penance. The vast majority of folks seem to believe it was "completely done away with."

Unfortunate and wrong in my opinion. "[Rules](#)" which so many deride, are for the good of the faithful to help the greatest number possible get to heaven. That is the mission of the Church on earth. Making this optional, through what is in effect a legal sleight of hand, is counter-productive.

BTW this is another example of the "spirit" of Vatican II. That is, not in Vatican II at all but done anyway. The 1966 USCCB document says "In summary, let it not be said that by this action, implementing the *spirit of renewal coming out of the Council*, we have abolished Friday, repudiated the holy traditions of our fathers, or diminished the insistence of the Church on the fact of sin and the need for penance." Yet, that is EXACTLY what has happened.

Now what?

Follow the universal norm and observe Friday penance by (for most of us) abstaining from meat. Do it for your own good and the good of the Church. Start now. Set an example for your family, friends and other parishioners. Ask them to join you and tell them why.

Pray that the USCCB learns from this giant mistake. Cardinal Timothy Dolan, while president of the USCCB in 2012, wrote: "The work of our Conference during the coming year includes reflections on re-embracing Friday as a particular day of penance, including the possible re-institution of abstinence on all Fridays of the year, not just during Lent." While the USCCB has yet to do this, the bishops' conference of England and Wales, who were in the same situation as us, has done so. Friday penance is reinstated there.

This contribution is available at <http://www.convertjournal.com/2015/01/friday-penance/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

The Loss of Jesus After Passover [at Suffering With Joy]



And His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch. And when He was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast. And after they had fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey, and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him (Luke 2:41-45).

I have often wondered about the daily life of the Holy Family, what they did, where they went, who they encountered all those years. But God has seen fit to let us know only this one story, and out of it we can learn many things. In fact, those things are what God wants us to know as they are material to our salvation.

We learn of this event from Mother Mary through the pen of St. Luke. How else could he have known of its happening? And it is the only particular we learn of the Child Jesus's life in the years since the return to Nazareth and the start of His public ministry.

Three times a year the Holy Family traveled to Jerusalem for feast days. They put God first, not their own comfort, doing this as a family. These trips reflect the pilgrim nature of the Jewish people, and are an allegory for the pilgrim nature of the Catholic who faithfully travels to Mass, no matter how convenient or inconvenient, to keep holy the Lord's Day or to make a pilgrimage to a shrine to honor God in a special way, or to live daily our pilgrimage to heaven through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

The Paschal trip was a celebration of thanksgiving and praise in commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews out of Egypt. Our celebration of the Holy Eucharist is the great thanksgiving and praise for our deliverance from the powers of darkness, for our redemption. Can we be any less faithful than the Holy Family when travel is so much easier today than it was then?

On this trip, Jesus was approaching the Jewish age of manhood where He would be given more freedom and responsibility. He was free to travel with the children and friends in the large pilgrim community headed back towards Nazareth, which is why neither Mary nor Joseph missed Him until the end of the first day of the return trip when they expected He would join them. We can imagine how frantic they must

have felt, their precious and only Child having disappeared.

Jesus sometimes disappears from the soul walking the path of righteousness. It isn't because we are bad any more than Mary and Joseph were doing something wrong to have lost Jesus on the way home. It is often a test of our faithfulness, or it may be the case that He, unknown to us, is working in our hearts. Always He is about His Father's business, and the Father's business is our sanctification. Like Mary and Joseph, we must faithfully be where we are supposed to be, doing what we're supposed to be doing.

We can have no better example of this in our day than Blessed Mother Teresa of Calcutta who searched for Jesus in the slums of the world and found Him many times over, even though she felt nothing of His presence and experienced the dark night of the soul for most of her life.

We might well ask ourselves, am I where I am supposed to be, doing what I'm supposed to be doing according to God's will? Do I search everywhere for Jesus from the depths of my heart to the public square to the tabernacle down the road?

We might call on Mary and Joseph to help us and comfort us along the way to finding their Son. They will understand our hearts.

Image: William Holman Hunt, *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple, 1860, oil on canvas, Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery. Source: Wikimedia Commons*

[V. Praised be Jesus Christ!](#)

R. Now and forever!

(Click on the link above to read why I end my posts this way.)

This contribution is available at <http://sufferingwithjoy.com/2015/01/21/the-loss-of-jesus-after-passover/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

"I don't believe in the deity of Mary nor the saints" [at Brutally Honest]



Continuing the series of posts responding to [Pastor Pete's numerous objections to the Catholic faith](#) (start at the bottom of the link and work your way up) brings us to this rather common one:

I don't believe in the deity of Mary nor the saints. This one will require further explanation. If a young child asks how God can hear millions of people pray at the same time, our likely answer will be because He is God, He is deity. But I find no answer how Mary or the saints could possess this omnipotent power, except to deify them, which I am compelled to reject.

Let's first begin by stating unequivocally that Catholics don't believe in the deity of Mary or the saints either. From the [Catechism as to the particularity of Mary's humanity](#):

Jesus has only God as Father. "He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures."

[Fr. Joe at Busted Halo](#) expounds:

Devotion to Mary goes back a long way in the Catholic church. But Catholics do not believe that Mary is divine and we don't pray to Mary. God, made flesh in Jesus and present in the Holy Spirit, is the only One to whom we pray.

We do believe that Mary holds a special place among the saints of the church, and that the saints are part of a community of faith and love that doesn't end with death. This "communion of saints" includes both the living and dead. We don't "pray to" the saints either, but we believe that we can

ask those who now live with God to pray for us, just as we pray for persons who have died.

Catholics don't worship Mary; rather, we honor her. We honor Mary as the mother of God, as the first disciple of Jesus, and as the mother of the church. All three of these titles have their origins in the fact that in Mary's life the Word of God became flesh and blood and that is the vocation to which every Christian is called — to live in such a way that God's generous compassion becomes alive in our flesh and blood, in in our words and actions.

We look to Mary as a model in whom we can trust, and as a mother who supports and nurtures our own journeys of faith. Turning to her as the first of Christians, we ask her to pray for us.

As to the question on whether or not Mary and/or the saints can hear our petitions, I found [this from Robert H. Brom, former Bishop of San Diego, that I think answers the question more than adequately:](#)

As Scripture indicates, those in heaven are aware of the prayers of those on earth. This can be seen, for example, in Revelation 5:8, where John depicts the saints in heaven offering our prayers to God under the form of "golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." But if the saints in heaven are offering our prayers to God, then they must be aware of our prayers. They are aware of our petitions and present them to God by interceding for us.

Some might try to argue that in this passage the prayers being offered were not addressed to the saints in heaven, but directly to God. Yet this argument would only strengthen the fact that those in heaven can hear our prayers, for then the saints would be aware of our prayers even when they are not directed to them!

In any event, it is clear from Revelation 5:8 that the saints in heaven do actively intercede for us. We are explicitly told by John that the incense they offer to God are the prayers of the saints. Prayers are not physical things and cannot be physically offered to God. Thus the saints in heaven are offering our prayers to God mentally. In other words, they are interceding.

...

Some objections to the concept of prayer to the saints betray restricted notions of heaven. One comes from anti-Catholic Loraine Boettner:

"How, then, can a human being such as Mary hear the prayers of millions of Roman Catholics, in many different countries, praying in many different languages, all at the same time?"

"Let any priest or layman try to converse with only three people at the same time and see how impossible that is for a human being. . . . The objections against prayers to Mary apply equally against prayers to the saints. For they too are only creatures, infinitely less than God, able to be at only one place at a time and to do only one thing at a time.

"How, then, can they listen to and answer thousands upon thousands of petitions made simultaneously in many different lands and in many different languages? Many such petitions are expressed, not orally, but only mentally, silently. How can Mary and the saints, without being like God, be present everywhere and know the secrets of all hearts?" (Roman Catholicism, 142-143).

If being in heaven were like being in the next room, then of course these objections would be valid. A mortal, unglorified person in the next room would indeed suffer the restrictions imposed by the way space and time work in our universe. But the saints are not in the next room, and they are not subject to the time/space limitations of this life.

This does not imply that the saints in heaven therefore must be omniscient, as God is, for it is only through God's willing it that they can communicate with others in heaven or with us. And Boettner's argument about petitions arriving in different languages is even further off the mark. Does anyone really think that in heaven the saints are restricted to the King's English? After all, it is God himself who gives the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues. Surely those saints in Revelation understand the prayers they are shown to be offering to God.

*The problem here is one of what might be called a primitive or even childish view of heaven. It is certainly not one on which enough intellectual rigor has been exercised. A good introduction to the real implications of the afterlife may be found in Frank Sheed's book *Theology and Sanity*, which argues that sanity depends on an accurate appreciation of reality, and that includes an accurate appreciation of what heaven is really like. And once that is known, the place of prayer to the saints follows.*

Some may grant that the previous objections to asking the saints for their intercession do not work and may even grant that the practice is permissible in theory, yet they may question it on other grounds, asking why one would want to ask the saints to pray for one. "Why not pray directly to Jesus?" they ask.

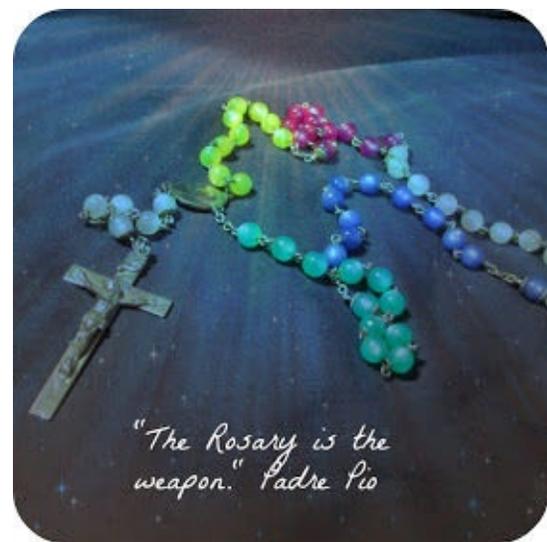
The answer is: "Of course one should pray directly to Jesus!" But that does not mean it is not also a good thing to ask others to pray for one as well. Ultimately, the "go-directly-to-Jesus" objection boomerangs back on the one who makes it: Why should we ask any Christian, in heaven or on earth, to pray for us when we can ask Jesus directly? If the mere fact that we can go straight to Jesus proved that we should ask no Christian in heaven to pray for us then it would also prove that we should ask no Christian on earth to pray for us.

Here's to hoping Pastor Pete, and others like him, are prayerfully considering each of these responses, not, unless God wills it, so that they might become Catholic but minimally so that they might know more about what has become for me a deep and so very rich faith.

Carry on dear reader.

This contribution is available at http://www.brutallyhonest.org/brutally_honest/2015/02/i-dont-believe-in-the-deity-of-mary-nor-the-saints.html
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Don't be Afraid to ... [at His UnEnding Love]



Be honest. Have you ever worn your Rosary out?

Wait! Do you know where your Rosary is?

Wait! Do you own a Rosary?

Wait! Do you know how to pray the Rosary?

These are important questions for a Catholic. Next to the Mass, the Rosary is one of the most powerful prayers we have in our arsenal of faith. Each mystery of the Rosary takes about 20 minutes to pray. Through each decade we view the Gospels with the eyes of Mary, His Mother.

The prayers of the Rosary are simple. We begin with the Apostles Creed which reminds us of the fundamentals of our faith. The rest of the prayers are basic, prayers we should have learned as children. There are a total of 6 Our Fathers, 6 Glory Be's, 53 Hail Mary's, and, between each decade the following prayer::

"Oh My Jesus, forgive us our sins. Save us from the fires of Hell. Lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are in most need of they mercy."

The prayers are repetitive and meditative.

Each decade brings to a different encounter with Jesus.

There are 4 mysteries of the Rosary::

The Joyful Mysteries

The Luminous Mysteries

The Sorrowful Mysteries

And

The Glorious Mysteries.

In each mystery, we learn more about the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, Son of the Father. He teaches us through His life how we are to live and pray. Even Jesus prayed to the Father.

When we pray the Rosary, we join with Mary, the Mother of God, in walking through Gospels.

In the Joyful Mysteries,

we learn of Mary's faith when the Angel Gabriel asked her to become the Mother of God.

We see Mary leave her hometown to care for her elderly cousin, Elizabeth, who was pregnant with John the Baptist,

becoming the first Tabernacle of Jesus.

We skip to the birth of Jesus to His presentation in the Temple, and to Jesus teaching the elders in the Temple as His parents frantically search for their Son.

In the Luminous Mysteries,

we see Jesus leaving home to begin His ministry.

He is baptized by John in the River Jordan.

Here it is that we meet the Father who is pleased with His Son, Jesus.

Jesus performs His First Miracle, at His Mother's prompting, at the wedding in Cana.

She said to the waiters, "Do whatever He tells you."

Jesus then begins His Ministry by proclaiming the Gospel of Salvation to the Jews.

We see Jesus Transfigured on the Mountain. His apostles are amazed when they see Jesus as God.

At the Last Supper, Jesus institutes the Sacrament of the Eucharist.

In the Sorrowful Mysteries,

Jesus prays in the Garden of Gethsemane. He prays for His Cup to pass, but He accepts the Will of the Father when it does not.

Jesus is arrested and taken before the Pilate who orders Him to be Scourged.

Many healthy men died during such scourings.

In the midst of the tortures He endured, He was beaten, whipped, and crowned with Thorns.

After all of this, Jesus was condemned to death, a death of shame, on the cross.

Yet, He begged His Father to forgive His torturers because they did not know what they were doing.

Jesus was crucified and hung between two thieves.

As He is dying, Jesus gives His Mother to us as our Mother.

Jesus dies on the cross.

In the Glorious Mysteries,

Jesus after being buried in the tomb is resurrected from the dead.

After 40 days, Jesus ascends into heaven in the presence of His Mother and the apostles.

As He promised, Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to enlighten and strengthen His followers who will carry on the work of His Church.

In the last two decades of the Rosary,

we return to Mary, His Mother, and ours.

Mary dies and is assumed into heaven, body and soul.

She is crowned Queen of Heaven and Earth.

The life of Jesus is condensed into the Rosary.

Based on Sacred Scripture, in the Rosary, we meet the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Each mystery is a prompt for meditation on the life of Jesus.

Through the Rosary, we come to know Him.

In our prayer, we come to know His Mother.

In our prayer, we come to know His Apostles and disciples.

This “extraordinary” event of love, which is the life of Jesus,

who, as the Second Person of the Triune God, defeated sin and satan.

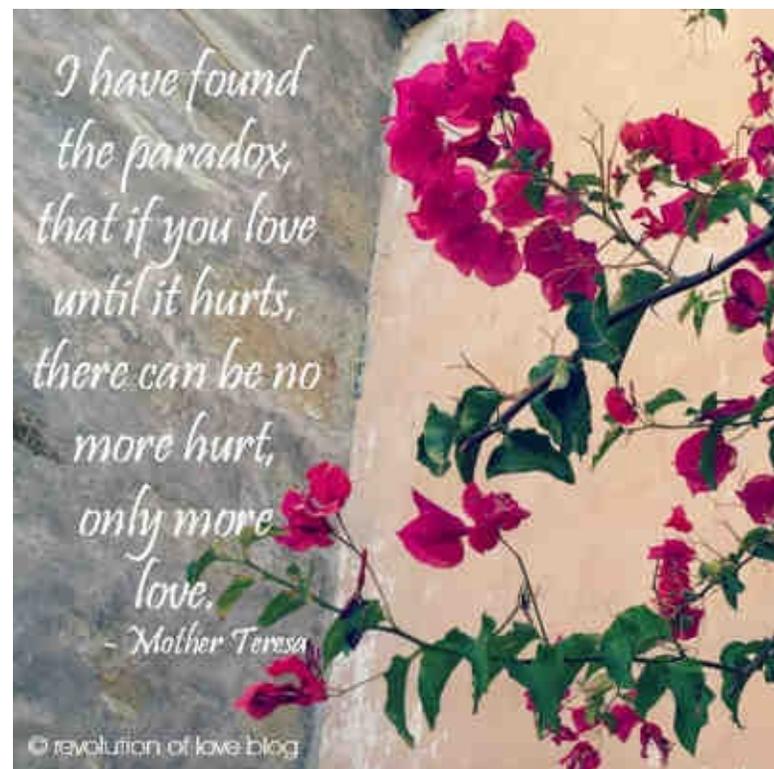
Know this act of love.

Pray the Rosary!

Don't be afraid to wear those beads out!

| [Contents](#) |

Loving Until It Hurts [at Revolution of Love Blog]



It's been a long and stressful week. My father-in-law is recovering from his stroke, although he is having heart issues which has not allowed him to leave the ICU. We are pleased he is getting the best care at Stanford but it makes spending time with him difficult since we are 90 miles away. My mother-in-law is unable to board up there so Brian drives and stays with her at Stanford on the weekends and we've been trying to round up enough of her friends to help drive during the week so Brian does not have to miss too much work. I feel bad for my in-laws and I am doing what I can to make this situation easier on them.

However, that also means doubling my current busy workload. That would be fine if I was a saintly woman who loved to suffer. It is not so great for a selfish sinner who hates to be put out. By Monday evening I was drained. Brian came home and we had a conversation like this.

Brian: You won't believe what I just saw outside. There are four wild turkeys in front of our driveway.

Bobbi: Are you sure those aren't just our kids?

Brian: No! There are huge turkeys walking up the street.

Bobbi: What the heck are turkeys doing in the neighborhood? That's weird. So is that a good omen or a bad omen?

Brian: Well, it could be that we are in a time of Thanksgiving.

Bobbi: Or it could mean we are about to be shot, beheaded, plucked and cooked.

Brian: (Sighs)

Yeah, I was not in the mood to be looking on the bright side. Later that evening, after apologizing to Brian for being so grouchy, I started thinking about a Hallmark movie I recently saw. (Don't hate on Hallmark. I love those sappy love stories.) 😊 In the movie, [A Novel Romance](#), two characters were having a discussion. The young woman Sophie was talking to an older friend Harris. They were recalling his wife who had died. The conversation went like this:

Harris: I don't pretend to know much about relationships. I only loved one woman in my life.

Sophie: You found your one true love.

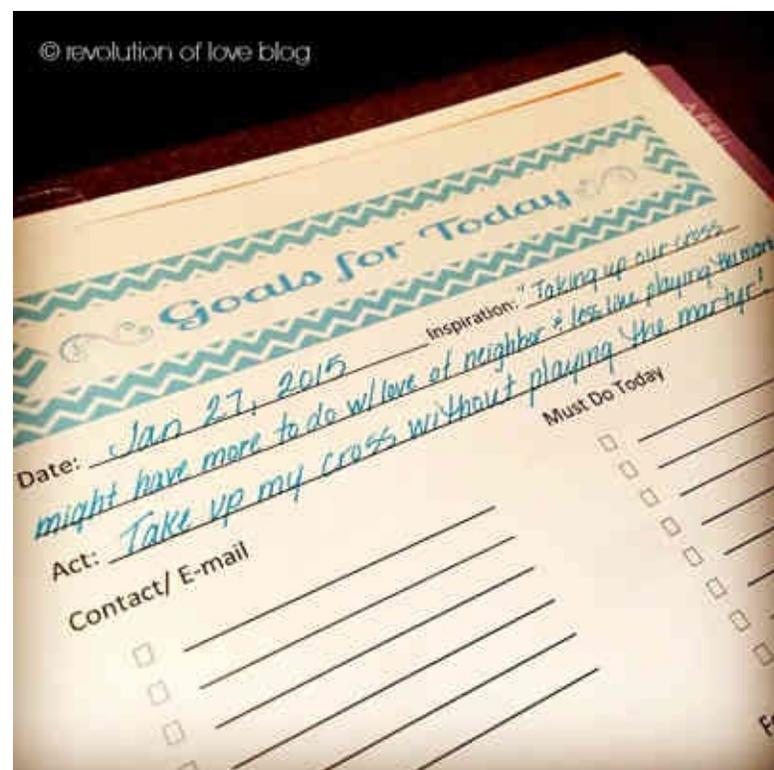
Harris: I know that now, but when Lola and I were together it wasn't always so clear. Loving someone is the hardest work there is. Oh, I messed up plenty. So did she. We disappointed each other sometimes. We said things we regretted later, but we never let it keep us apart no matter how bad things seemed at the time. It wasn't true love because it was easy. It was because we worked at it. We fought for it.

I love that.

It wasn't true love because it was easy. It was because we worked at it. We fought for it.

That little piece of dialogue pretty much sums up our life lesson as wives and mothers. I have found my true love but it isn't always kisses and love notes. There are also disagreements and annoying habits and the monotonous day to day chores. I have four sweet babies but it isn't always hugs and kisses and drawings for mama. There are also messes, laundry, tantrums, sleepless nights and an endless stream of toys on the floor. There are seasons of joy and celebration and there are seasons of heavy crosses – illness, job loss, miscarriage, infertility, (or no break between pregnancies,) a death of a loved one. These big and little crosses stretch us and test us to the core. We find out if our love is only pretty words or the real thing through thick and thin.

I admit there are times when I can't take it and just want to scream. Why am I so stressed? Maybe because I spent too much time goofing off on the computer and then I had to rush around in a tizzy to get dinner on the table. Or maybe I am tired and cranky because the night before I binge watched too many episode of my favorite show. Times like that, I have no one to blame but myself. I know I am capable of doing what I need to do but I am just being very self-centered and not wanting to love the way God is asking me. My priorities are askew and I need to make corrections pronto.



Monday was one of those days. I made matters worse by not doing first things first – ie. prayer and daily duties. The following day I made sure to put prayer first. I opened up my [daily meditation](#) and began to pray.

Sometimes God is every so gentle with me and sometimes He just gives me the swift kick in the arse that I need. This was a swift kick day. The line that jumped out at me was

‘Taking up our cross’ might have a little more to do with love of neighbor and a little less like playing the martyr.

Ouch. This kept echoing in my head – “Pick up your cross without playing the martyr.”

But I am so *good* at playing the martyr, Lord! Huffing and puffing and rolling my eyes because nothing is working out the way *I want it*. At those times I can almost hear Jesus say, “Really? After all that I’ve done for you, this is how you are going to act? Like a spoiled child? Is your love really that fickle?” Sigh. Our Lord knows me too well.

However, there are those days, when I am seriously giving 110% of myself and it is still not enough. I am overwhelmed by the weight of whatever cross I am caring. That is when Jesus is most gentle with me. He comforts me and gives me the grace to love even when it hurts. That is when He reminds me to slow down long enough to look at the blessings around me, despite the difficulties.



“Love bears all things,
believes all things,
hopes all things,
endures all things.
Love never ends”
(1 Cor 13:7-8)

© revolution of love blog

To love someone, whether a spouse, child, parent or friend, means to be there in the good and the bad. To lift them up and carry them when they are weak. As I type this, I'm getting a mental picture of Samwise Gamgee as he carries Frodo up the slopes of Mount Doom. That is love. Right now God is calling me to be Samwise to my family. I need to stop whining and get to work.

I've been in this position before and I know what I must do to survive it.

1. Drop to my knees.

- My day goes so much better when I pray in the morning, whether it is long or brief.
- Talk to God throughout the day. I need to ask for God's grace and for the strength and courage to follow his will in my life right now.
- When the complaining starts to enter my mind, I need to give it to God and ask for his grace to see the good around me.

2. Take care of my physical needs.

- Eat. (No skipping breakfast then binging at lunch because I'm starving.)
- Take my vitamins and drink. (Water, that is.) 😊
- Exercise. Sure my beach walks are awesome but those are getting more difficult these days. Even a 10 minute walk up and down the driveway is better than nothing.
- Sleep. I am a night owl and I have to force myself to not stay up until the wee hours of the morning.

3. Know my limit and not be afraid to ask for help.

- I can do a lot (when I am in the right frame of mind) but when I reach the point of losing it, I have to do whatever I can to step away or take a break. If Brian cannot watch the kids for a little bit then I need to find someone who can give me a hand.
- Sometimes even a call from my mom and just hearing her voice is enough to settle my spirit and give me strength.

- There have been many times people have offered to help but I always tell them, “oh, that’s okay” because I feel like I need to do it myself. People want to help. I need to humble myself and let them.

These are a few steps I take to help me love and live my vocation as a wife and mother. What about you? What things help you when you are loving until it hurts?

UPDATE: After posting this, my father-in-law was moved out of ICU. He is still having issues but it is a step in the right direction. The next hurdle is to get him out of Stanford and back to Monterey to heal. Thanks for your continues prayers! 😊

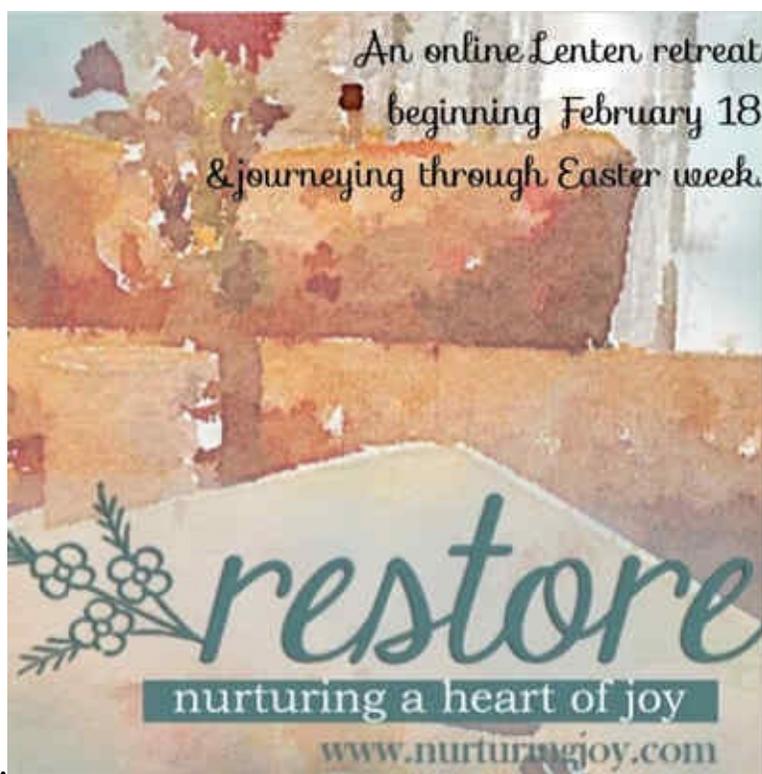
* * * * *



Photo Credit – ElizabethFoss.com

I know I [mentioned this before](#) but if you are in a difficult season of life or you feel like you are struggling to find joy and peace in your current chaos, I strongly recommend Elizabeth Foss’ online [Lenten Retreat – Restore](#). I joined [last year](#) when I was struggling with Brian’s cancer and caring for the household and it did wonders for me. The daily meditations, the essays and the podcasts were a balm to my soul. A year later, I still go through my notes and remind myself of the lessons God was teaching me.

Currently, I am not experiencing the burnout I had last year but I signed up for the retreat anyway because I know the Holy Spirit will use it again to continue to guide me and draw me closer. I understand that the cost of \$65 is more than some people can afford. If that is the case, but you feel like you need to go, then lay it before the feet of Jesus. Tell him that if you are meant to go, then to please provide the means. He



just may surprise you.

Photo Credit: ElizabethFoss.com

I hope you'll join me so we can make this journey together. Have a blessed weekend!

Bobbi ☺

This contribution is available at <http://www.revolutionoflove.com/blog/loving-until-it-hurts/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Here Comes Hypocrisy (yet again...) [at Arnobius of Sicca]

[A tale of two cakes: Colorado's far-reaching religious freedom fight :: Catholic News Agency \(CNA\)](#)



Remember the case where a baker was sued for refusing to provide a wedding cake for a ceremony involving a same sex “marriage” and it was considered a violation of civil rights? Well, a counter-case is going on where an individual targeted a bakery requesting a cake with anti-gay messages on it. The baker in this second case was willing to provide a cake, but not the messages on the case. The second baker was giving the same reason that the first baker gave—being forced to do something they believed was morally offensive.

However, while in the first case the baker was considered to be a bigot, in the second case, the baker was seen as defending his rights. I’m sure that in both cases the bakeries were set up for the purposes of creating lawsuits. But the treatment of the two cases are different.

In both cases the business owners want the right to not be forced to do something they find offensive. This leaves three options:

1. They can recognize the fact that nobody can be compelled to do something which they find morally evil by the courts and lawmakers.
2. They can force every belief to be scrutinized by the state for validity.
3. They can behave in a partisan manner and support views they agree with, while ignoring those they dislike.

Option #1 is the just solution. Let businesses act in accordance with their moral values and don't let the state force its way into becoming the arbiter of right and wrong. Unfortunately, this option would force governments (local, state, federal) to tolerate views they disagree with. Option #2 would be worthy of a dictatorship, but not the USA. Option #3 would be sheer hypocrisy, injustice done for the sake of helping those one liked while using the law to silence those one disliked.

(If I were to bet however, my money would be that #3 is the ultimate result)

So here's the thing. If you want to be just, those who make and enforce law have to let the Christian businesses have the right to refuse to do things they find offensive. Otherwise, this is behavior worthy of a dictatorship, not a free nation.

I've seen people argue that the two cases are not the same thing. That the Christian bakery is practicing intolerance, while the other bakery is opposing it. But this is an assertion which assumes what needs to be proven—that the Christian belief is based on the intolerance of a person instead of on the moral conviction that some behaviors are wrong. These two things are different, and before we are indicted of hatred, the charge needs to be proven that this *is* our motive, not that this motive be assumed.

I've seen people argue that the case of the Christian bakery was “only” remote cooperation with something deemed wrong and so it could be compelled, while the secular bakery would be forced into direct cooperation, and so it could not be compelled. But that's making the state the arbiter of what is and what isn't legitimate religious and moral teaching. The Christian bakery believes that taking part in providing for a same sex “wedding” is wrong and would cause scandal by giving the impression that they supported this just as much as the secular bakery would believe this was wrong and scandalous.

I've also seen people argue that by the very fact of saying same sex acts are wrong, we are judging people, which is itself hateful. But by that token, claiming we are behaving wrongly by opposing same sex relationships is also judging people. By our saying certain actions are wrong, we are not contradicting our belief that we are still called to love the person who commits them. But the person who says “tolerate others you disagree with,” is contradicting their own beliefs when they refuse to tolerate us and our beliefs.

Christians aren't being hypocritical in professing an act as being morally wrong, because they recognize the difference between the sin and the human being. The Catechism says:

2357 Homosexuality refers to relations between men or between women who experience an exclusive or predominant sexual attraction toward persons of the same sex. It has taken a great variety of forms through the centuries and in different cultures. Its psychological genesis remains largely unexplained. Basing itself on Sacred Scripture, which presents homosexual acts as acts of grave depravity,¹⁴¹ tradition has always declared that “homosexual acts are intrinsically disordered.”¹⁴² They are contrary to the natural law. They close the sexual act to the gift of life. They do not proceed from a genuine affective and sexual complementarity. Under no circumstances can

they be approved. (2333)

2358 The number of men and women who have deep-seated homosexual tendencies is not negligible. This inclination, which is objectively disordered, constitutes for most of them a trial. They must be accepted with respect, compassion, and sensitivity. Every sign of unjust discrimination in their regard should be avoided. These persons are called to fulfill God's will in their lives and, if they are Christians, to unite to the sacrifice of the Lord's Cross the difficulties they may encounter from their condition.

2359 Homosexual persons are called to chastity. By the virtues of self-mastery that teach them inner freedom, at times by the support of disinterested friendship, by prayer and sacramental grace, they can and should gradually and resolutely approach Christian perfection. (2347)

We're not the *Westboro Baptist Church*. We don't think that people with a same sex attraction are damned for that fact. But we do believe homosexual acts are morally wrong and must be avoided by people who would live in right relation with Christ. We do believe that marriage is intended to be between one man and one woman as Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself has said (Matthew 19:4-6):

⁴ He said in reply, "Have you not read that from the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female' ⁵ and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate."

We will do our best to witness to this truth, and show people why they need to heed this, and yes we will seek to pass laws which reflect true morality, as opposed to judicial *diktat*. But we're not motivated by hate in doing so, and we're not violating anyone's rights in doing so.

The same cannot be said about those who would force a Christian bakery to do what it believed to be morally wrong.

This contribution is available at <http://arnobius-of-sicca.blogspot.com/2015/01/here-comes-hypocrisy-yet-again.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Visit the Imprisoned [at Harvesting The Fruits of Contemplation]



“It’s Worth Revisiting” Wednesday again, where a group of Catholic bloggers have accepted the invitation of Allison Gingras and Elizabeth Riordan, to re-post their favorite articles.

Do yourself a favor- [go there now](#) (and every Wednesday) and let the bloggers who post there stir up your Faith.

This is what I decided to share:

Visit The Imprisoned

(Originally posted April 23, 2012 and included in my book,

[*Fleeting Glimpses of the Silly, Sentimental and Sublime*](#)

)



When we read or hear the Scriptural reminder of the eternal consequences for our failing to visit the imprisoned (Matthew 25: 31-46) more often than not the image that first comes to mind is of those locked behind bars in the far too numerous Federal and State prisons and local jails that saturate the landscape of this nation – some 2,266,800 adults in 2010 according to the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics. More than 2 million! Many of them are Catholic and none of them are there voluntarily!

Admittedly, Jesus is not calling every Catholic to be His representative and ambassador to our forgotten convicted brothers and sisters. Certainly though more are being invited to this needed ministry than are responding. Is God calling you? Is fear holding you back?

But there is one prisoner you need not fear. One that each and everyone who professes to be Catholic, without exception, is being called to visit. He has been imprisoned and been ignored for more than two thousand years. Unlike his 2,266,800 incarcerated brothers and sisters in the U.S.

, He is imprisoned voluntarily and out of love. Yet, the majority of those He loves and who profess to love Him ignore Him, and rarely if ever visit Him.

He is in every Catholic Church where the Blessed Sacrament is reserved - but for all practical purposes, in too many instances – He is alone and abandoned. Even the few inclined to visit Him, often find the Church doors locked. How can that be for a Church and its members who are called to make the Eucharist, the source, center and summit of their lives? How can Love Himself be in our midst

and so few care to be in His Presence?



Go visit your imprisoned Lord who longs to see you, listen to you, talk to you, and make you whole. He awaits you in the locked tabernacles of His Churches or exposed in a Sacred Monstrance.

During your visits, bless His ears and warm His Sacred Heart by repeating the loving words St. Maria Faustina offered Him:

"O Jesus, Divine Prisoner of Love, when I consider Your love and how You emptied Yourself for me, my senses deaden. You hide Your inconceivable majesty and lower Yourself to miserable me. O king of Glory, though You hide Your beauty, yet the eye of my soul rends the veil. I see the angelic choirs giving You honor without cease, and all the heavenly Powers praising You without cease, and without cease they are saying: Holy, Holy, Holy...I adore You, Lord and Creator, hidden in the Most Blessed Sacrament."

Visit this Prisoner as often as you can. Love requires nothing less.

This contribution is available at <http://harvestingthefruitsofcontemplation.blogspot.com/2015/02/its-worth-revisiting-wednesday-visit.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Gratitude Attitude

This post was born while I changed a poopy diaper. Not so surprising since I do a lot of that.

As is sometimes the case, my toddler fought my effort to make him clean, pleasant-smelling, and rash-free by flailing around, threatening to inadvertently smear feces over everything within heiney's reach. As I struggled to wipe the mess from my precious son's behind, I wondered for the umpteenth time why he did it. Not the pooping. I'm pretty clear on the reason for that. It's the flailing that causes consternation.

Seriously. If someone is willing to wipe your poopy behind for you because you can't do it yourself, praise God, be grateful, and try to make the experience as pleasant and short-lived as possible. Don't thrash around like a crazy person, kicking at the blessed soul who wipes your stinky hindquarters and still loves you more than life itself. Don't twist away, pushing at the changing pad, shrieking and laughing. Where's the gratitude?

Where's the Gratitude?

And then I thought, where's *my* gratitude? Not on the easy stuff. I like to think I'm of a grateful sort. In an effort to curb envy, I've made a practice of being thankful instead.

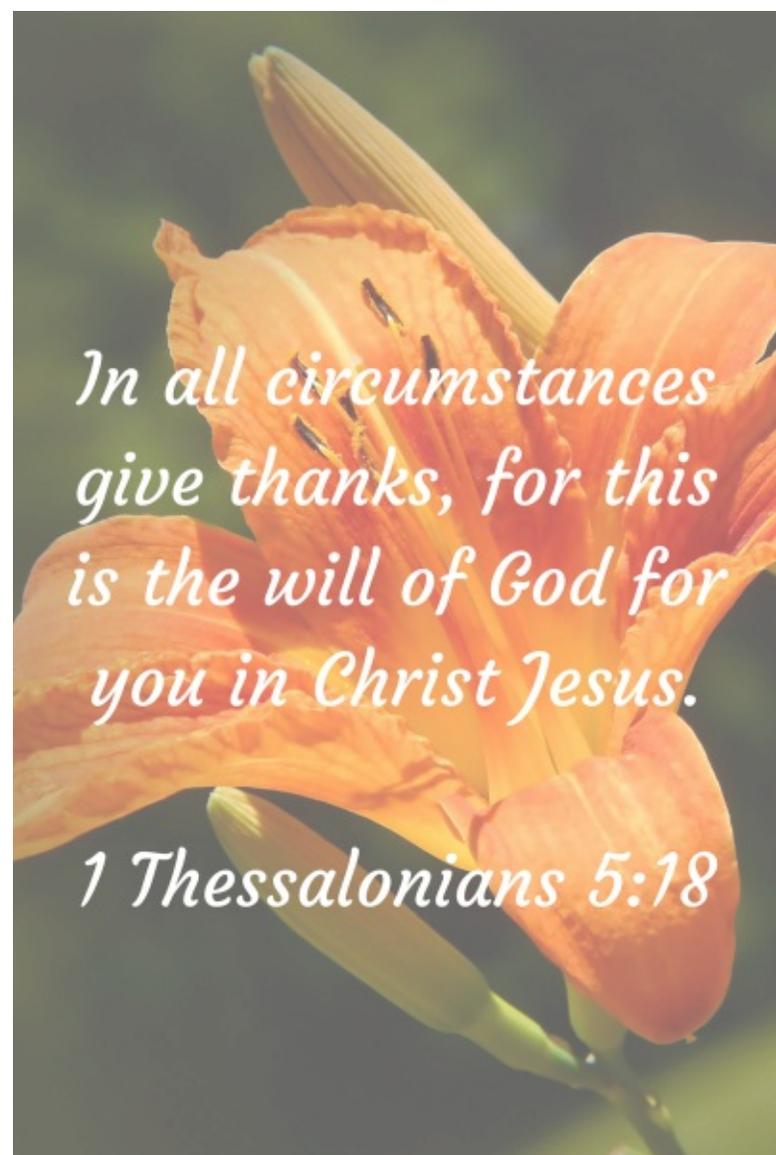
The neighbor zipping by in his sports car to his home that's three times the size of ours and worth four times as much?

Thank you, Lord, that I've always had a safe, comfortable place to live.

The family that seems to have it all together, not falling apart at the seams, like ours?

Thank you, Lord, for the blessings of my husband and the children you've entrusted to us.

For a long time, I made it part of my bedtime prayer routine to thank God for ten things that day. Never once was I unable to come up with ten things. Often many more. But they were often exclusively the good things. How often do I thank God for the crap? The stuff that looks to me like someone unfairly holding me back, gripping me by the ankles while I thrash and kick and try to get away? The hard stuff for which St. Paul says we should be grateful. Things like sending patience via children that have frayed my nerves to the very end. Or the opportunity to practice forgiveness and humility when my husband and I argue over the same. old. stuff.



*In all circumstances
give thanks, for this
is the will of God for
you in Christ Jesus.*

1 Thessalonians 5:18

I've decided to adopt the practice of being thankful for the hard stuff, not just the easy, good stuff. I've often seen [Sarah Reinhard](#) posting #grateful tweet on Twitter. I intend to add some myself. On the hard stuff, whether or not I'm able to see it through my fallen, selfish perspective. So I can stop twisting away bent on my will, not His will and be grateful for gifts I don't always recognize or understand.

Do you find it difficult to be grateful for the tough stuff? Have you ever kept a [gratitude journal](#)?

This contribution is available at <http://carolynastfalk.com/2015/01/26/gratitude-attitude/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

If the Second Vatican Council Had Never Happened, Would We Still Have a "New Mass"? -- Quite Possibly [at Archdiocese of Washington Blog]



One of the unfortunate couplings with those who lament the loss of the “pre-Conciliar” Mass (a.k.a. Traditional Latin Mass (TLM), Extraordinary Form, 1962 Missal, etc.) is the linking of the “New Mass” (a.k.a. Ordinary Form) wholly with the Second Vatican Council. This connection, while understandable given the emergence of the Ordinary Form just after the Council, is too simplistic and is unhelpful for a number of reasons. Without the Second Vatican Council, would the Ordinary Form of the Mass be similar to what it is today? We can only speculate. But given what was under way long before the Council in both the Church and Western culture, it seems likely that, Council or not, there would have been a heavy altering of the Mass as it was known mid-century.

I will attempt to make this argument historically in a moment, but first consider why this is strategically and pastorally important.

I. Strategy - It is significant as a pastoral stance to articulate why we should decouple concerns about the Ordinary Form of the Mass from the Second Vatican Council. It is one thing to express concerns with the current state of the liturgy, which of itself is a focused matter, capable of reconsideration, organic developments, and the exercise of legitimate options. But it is another matter to enter into a dispute with an entire Ecumenical Council, a Council that considered many things of varying theological weights and issued two dogmatic constitutions. While no new dogmas were proposed, *Lumen Gentium* (on the Church) and *Dei Verbum* (on Sacred Scripture) were important reaffirmations of the Church’s teaching regarding what are some disputed matters today.

Whether the perception is fair or not, many who favor the TLM are seen as repudiating the Second Vatican Council in general. Allowing such a perception to continue takes the legitimate discussion of liturgical concerns down a lot of rabbit holes that broaden the conversation into unnecessarily wider

ideological categories (such as right vs. left, new vs. old, progressive vs. antiquarian, etc.). It also lights up other more serious matters such as ecclesiology, authority, sacramental theology, and so forth. We who love liturgical tradition would do well to focus the discussion on liturgical matters and leave other theological concerns about the Council (if we have them at all (many of us do not)) for other times. Further, recourse to the actual Council documents is both salutary and necessary in order to enhance ongoing liturgical excellence.

II. History - In terms of decoupling the Ordinary Form from the Council it is also helpful to recall some history that most of us know, but tend to underemphasize.

1. The “Liturgical Movement” had been underway for almost 60 years prior to the Second Vatican Council. Most liturgists fix the date of 1909 and the Malines Conference as the official beginning of the Liturgical Movement that sought to address liturgical disputes and concerns that had been brewing for centuries. Some of the concerns were very understandable: a cluttered calendar and related complexities such as multiple Collects and observances. It’s hard to doubt that the increasing notion of “modernity” likely influenced desires for change in a more problematic way and that this idea grew through mid-century.
2. Even before 1906, Pope Pius X began an overhaul of the Breviary as he saw fit. More on that here: [Strange Moments in Liturgical History](#)
3. Then came the two World Wars. But despite that, liturgists were still meeting and writing.
4. Things started to get official in the mid-forties. The *Sectio Historica* of the Sacred Congregation of Rites formally commenced the work of reform in 1946 with a *Promemoria intorno alla riforma liturgica*. This was presented to Pope Pius XII in May. With papal approval, Austrian Redemptorist Joseph Löw began to draft a plan for a general reform. This was completed at the end of 1948 and published the following year as *Memoria sulla riforma liturgica*. A papal commission for liturgical reform was established in 1946, but it was May 1948 before its members were appointed. [Annibale] Bugnini, its secretary, ... observes that it “worked in absolute secrecy” and enjoyed the “full confidence of the Pope” [Alcuin Reid, *The Organic Development of the Liturgy*, p. 150-151].
5. So note: nothing less than a papal commission was already beginning the work to set forth a plan for a “general reform” of the Liturgy. And note, too, the coming to the fore of one A. Bugnini.
6. The commission came out rather quickly with the overhaul of the Holy Week Liturgies in 1951. While well received by most, the changes were sweeping. Even more, they set forth some problematic principles later critiqued by Louis Boyer and others, including Alcuin Reid.
7. Among the shifts in principles that developed through the 1940s and 50s, was a tendency to emphasize the needs of “modern man” (as if we were some new sort of species) and to heavily weight antiquity over legitimate developments from other ages, especially the Medieval period. Joseph Jungmann, S.J., though having authored a well-researched study of liturgical history in *The Mass of the Roman Rite*, tilted heavily in other works toward the ancient liturgy. Jungmann became very influential. And though Pope Pius XII warned of “antiquarianism” in *Mediator Dei*, the balance decidedly shifted there anyway through the 1950s and beyond.
8. Finally came the Second Vatican Council. The output of the papal commission for general reform was

taken into the Council process largely “as is” and support for it expanded.

I do not in any way affirm all these. I simply note them and point out that they were under way well before the Council.

III. All of this leads to the focal question: If there had been no Second Vatican Council would we still have witnessed a significant change in the Mass and its celebration? The answer would seem to be yes. As I have tried to show, things were already advancing quite rapidly prior to 1960 and would likely have continued apace. While the Council may have infused a widespread notion of “aggiornamento” that added rapidity and the expectation of change, the Liturgical Movement, for better or worse, was already moving along quite rapidly and deeply and would likely have continued to do so.

Clearly, I speculate here. But, frankly, so do those who would dispute the answer. None of us can really know for sure what would have happened in an alternate universe, absent the Council. However, some significant overhaul of the liturgy seemed to be in the offing, for better or worse, Council or not. (Arguably, the Ordinary Form promulgated in 1970 is not the actual Missal of the Council; the 1965 Missal is. I’d like to review its elements next week and show that the changes in it fell far short of the changes that were ushered in with the 1970 Missal.)

My real point in raising this is to encourage those of us who love the TLM and other older forms to be careful to distinguish the Second Vatican Council from the Ordinary Form of the Mass. I encourage this for the two reasons stated above: first, a strategy that allows us to be identified (fairly or not) with the repudiation of an entire Ecumenical Council is an unwise strategy; second, knowledge of the history of the whirlwind 20th century shows that the relationship of the liturgical changes to the Council are more complex than generally appreciated by a simplistic “pre-Conciliar vs. post-Conciliar” mentality.

None of what I write should be taken to mean that the Ordinary Form in its exact specifications was inevitable, or that those who love the TLM are on the “wrong side of history.” On the contrary, we should see ourselves as a legitimate part of today’s liturgical diversity and should seek to influence the discussion *today* rather than returning so regularly to rehash a complex Council that occurred over fifty years ago. Decoupling our stance from an assessment of the Second Vatican Council is an important element in advancing the conversation *today*.

OK, take what you like and leave the rest. But as with any discussion on Liturgy, try to avoid personal attacks and campy simplifications. For the record, I celebrate both forms of the Mass and find pastoral blessings and challenges in each. But let’s avoid a combox discussion that generates more heat than light. Be of good cheer; we are in the realm of speculation, not fact. In terms of strategy, reasonable people will differ.

Here is an example of how the older “ars celebrandi” can help with either form of the Mass. Most of the advice given in this video could be easily applied to the new form. Some may dispute an overly rigid mannerism, but allowing room for personal adaptation, the principles here are helpful advice.

HTTP/1.1 200 OK Server: nginx Date: Sat, 14 Feb 2015 16:29:12 GMT Content-Type: text/html; charset=UTF-8 Transfer-Encoding: chunked Connection: keep-alive Vary: Accept-Encoding Vary: Cookie X-hacker: If you're reading this, you should visit automattic.com/jobs and apply to join the fun, mention this header. X-Pingback: <https://melaniejeanjuneau.wordpress.com/xmlrpc.php> Link: ; rel=shortlink Last-Modified: Sat, 14 Feb 2015 16:29:12 GMT Cache-Control: max-age=300, must-revalidate X-nananana: Batcache X-ac: 1.dca _dca

It is GOD Who Converts [at joy]

It is GOD Who Converts [at joy]

My words alone will not convince an atheist. Yes, Catholics need theology and apologetics, but these disciplines will not convert anybody, because Christianity is not primarily a moral theology or a philosophy, but a relationship of love. By focusing upon the reality of our Christian experiences as they truly are, Christ becomes a living Messiah not only to us, but a visible light to others.



The

contemplative learns about deep trust and complete abandonment to One he knows to be beyond all understanding. The mystic does not have all the answers; he is not afraid to admit that he does not understand everything and he certainly does not berate or belittle those who are searching. The true mystic experiences God as unknowable, not an object nor a thing to be studied. God cannot be boxed in, defined because He is a mystery. Such experiential faith reveals itself in the ground of our being. This is where dialogue with atheists can begin, because God dwells at the core of our selves, atheists and indeed of all life.

Rather than allowing God to use us as a light, it is easy to become self-righteous, or defensive, when we feel attacked by atheists. However, indignant arrogant rants that bludgeon others with the 'truth' treats the unbeliever as an object and not an intelligent person who is also loved by God. When I am secure in the Love of God, I can love and respect everyone because I do not feel threatened. Then it is possible to encourage respectful dialogue that actually listens to the crux of atheists' concerns and doubts. Such dialogue opens the door for the Holy Spirit to become the Divine Moderator of the discussion

1 Corinthians 13: 4,5,6,9,12

Love is always patient and kind; love is never jealous; love is not boastful or conceited, it is never rude and never seeks its own advantage, it does not take offence or store up grievances. Love does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but finds its joy in the truth.....For we know only imperfectly... Now we see only reflections in a mirror, mere riddles, but then we shall be seeing face to face.

Many believers still cling to a false idea of a God with a white beard on a throne. This image is a finite human creation, not the real, infinite Creator of the universe. Of course, intelligent atheists reject false, naive views of God. My own personal experience of the Holy, Immortal One, is often closer to the mystical apophatic tradition. The Christian contemplative is a life of prayer. Such devotion is not one of rigid perfection and certitude, but a life which involves inner struggle, growth and healing, as we journey deeper into the Mystical Body of Christ. The honest life in Christ is rooted in humility not pride, because we are constantly aware of our own sinfulness and wounds.

Ultimately, it is God who reveals Himself to the atheist.

A brilliant young friend was an atheist. He availed himself to understanding Christianity. When I asked what he had read on spirituality or Christianity he simply replied, "The library". One day, we were in a prayer group, and while praying, my friend relaxed as merely an observer on the margins of the group. Suddenly, he suddenly started to laugh. Our eyes popped open in surprise. This quiet, subdued young man was beaming, and he exclaimed,

"I'm hot all over, especially inside my chest, my heart really. It feels like a glowing, golden mist all around me, inside of me...but it was there all the time; I just couldn't feel it or see it. All of a sudden I am plugged into a circuit board of power that has been here the entire time. God is real. He exists. I can't believe it. Why did I not see something all around me, in my face? I feel this energy flowing between everyone in this room and connecting to me as well, like electrical currents, like invisible bands or cords. I want to jump up and down and start yelling on the top of my voice that God exists and He is right here."

God converts atheists and draws them to the Church while our self-righteous preaching drives them away. What God really needs from us is just one open window, one landing strip, one antenna to perform miraculous conversions.

published on [Catholic 365.com](http://Catholic365.com)

This contribution is available at <http://melaniejeanuneau.wordpress.com/2015/01/11/it-is-god-who-converts/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Whence The Magi: Baby, You'Re Gonna Be A Star Someday [at GONZO HOMILETICS]

THE EPIPHANY OF THE LORD (Mt 2:1-12)

Now the shepherds were not the only ones who visited the Holy Family after Jesus was born. Stargazers from Arabia arrived shortly after the shepherds.

They stopped at the fortress-palace of Herod the Great to water their camels and to ask for directions. Men are often too proud to admit when we're lost but the stargazers swallowed their pride and entered the palace.

They didn't prostrate before the king; they didn't offer him gifts. They simply asked a question.

“Where is the newborn king of the Jews? For we have seen his star rising from the east and have come to pay him homage.”

Herod sat up. “Come again?”

The question from the magi greatly troubled the king even as his physicians pried the leeches from his back. Why didn't I see this coming? he asked himself. Too late. The fat was in the fire. The prophecy was clear. Time for damage control.

Assembling his quislings Herod questioned them about where this 'messiah' was born. One brave soul spoke openly and recited the prophecy from the Septuagint, the Greek-language Bible.

“ ‘And you, Bethlehem, land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; since from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel’ ” (Mi 5:1; cf 2 Sm 5:20).

It was the prophet Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, who foretold the birth of the Messiah in Bethlehem, seven miles southeast of Jerusalem.

But even before Micah, Balaam the Moabite, a pagan, busted for animal cruelty, spoke of a star rising over Israel, a celestial occurrence that alerted the world that something marvelous was about to happen.

The magi knew their way around the cosmos. The fact that they were guided by a star suggests that they were learned in astrology and the science of navigation and mathematics. And to think, they didn't even have smart phones.

With the entrance of the magi into biblical history the feast known as Epiphany was established. We three kings from orient are representatives of the universal mission of the Church offered to humanity by God through his Son.

Christ the Lord was born on Christmas not only for Jews or Christians but for the entire human family.

With the magi, representatives of the world's religions, the heart of the Gospel goes out to those who believe the prophecy, all who search diligently for the child Jesus.

What the magi saw and heard on their journey they transported home making them not just scientists but evangelizers.

Curiosity killed the cat but it led the wise men to the truth.

They journeyed across the sands to see for themselves whether the prophecy wrapped in swaddling clothes and sleeping in his mother's arms was legitimate, was worth the long, strange trip. They did not return home disappointed.

In my young and undiscovered days I rented a beach house in Florida. This was in the mid-to-late 90s. Nightly I sat on a dune watching the Hale-Bopp Comet, one of the largest comets ever recorded in the annals of astronomy.

Who wouldn't be fascinated by such a rare and important occurrence?

From the dawn of humanity shooting stars and celestial bodies have fascinated us before we even learned to write. In biblical times asteroids, meteors, and lunar and solar eclipses heralded omens good or evil, and served as harbingers of the births of rulers.

Today we know that a comet is a chunk of rock and ice hurtling through space at unclockable speeds from beyond the planet Pluto.

When the modern scientist looks to the stars they write another grant proposal. To the ancient ‘man of science’ such an event as a stationary star hovering above the earth indicated that something important had taken place, was worth checking out.

After the magi left the palace, the king paced the halls and climbed the walls and put his yes-men to the sword when they failed to calm his qualms. “Who are these ‘wise men’? From whence do they come? Wither goest thou? Caspar, Melchior, Balthazar—never heard of ‘em. Charlatans, the lot.”

Herod could no longer trust in the god of his stomach, couldn’t deny that the child of which the strangers spoke wasn’t just another Jewish prophet. Like Abraham, a deep, terrifying darkness enveloped the king.

In those days sorcerers practiced medicine, philosophy, and studied the natural sciences. Instead of teaching at universities they worked for government think-tanks, reporting to their boss what he wanted to hear for fear of losing tenure—and their heads.

Rulers bankrolled these scholars, employing them as consultants and PR experts to enhance their reputation. Like Jonathan Gruber, they served up vats of Kool-Aid for the thirsty populace stoned immaculate on the wine of fabrication.

Herod received his share intravenously. He was described as a “man with two souls.” One sordid soul was steeped in the Greek language and culture that stripped Jerusalem of its Jewish character, not unlike what Vatican II did to Catholicism.

The other soul possessing Herod drew him toward desert mysticism, practiced as he was in the art of burying his head in the sand.

In general, Herod was an efficient ruler. The Romans enthroned him as King of Judea, the ‘king of the Jews, as it were. His ‘messianic aspirations’ more or less swung his bipolar personality into balance, the way one balances a mattress on a bottle of wine.

So the jesters in his court were not surprised when their ruler freaked out over what the mysterious strangers told him. When the magi—kings in their own countries—ascertained that the audience was over they turned to leave.

“Go and search diligently for the child,” Herod called after them. “When you find him, bring me word, that I, too, may go and pay him homage (Mt 2:8).

“Assuredly, O King, we will. But don’t call us; we’ll call you.” These guys were good. A man standing on three legs is hard to topple.

They also were practiced in the art of deception; they juked Herod, the way a fullback jukes a linebacker out of his cleats.

Back on track the messianic light of the star of David led them to Bethlehem. They introduced themselves to the Holy Family who no longer lived in the stable but obtained proper quarters to raise a child.

“On entering the house they saw the child with Mary his mother. They prostrated and did him homage. Then they opened their treasures and offered gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh” (Mt 2:11).

They gave Jesus gold because he was a king; they anointed him with frankincense because he was God; they offered myrrh to Mary so that she could anoint her son before she buried him.

Well, eventually the comet disappeared into the cosmos and I left behind my life on the beach. Across the gulf at Texas A&M University a law professor determined the identity and purpose of the magi.

His name was Frederick Larson and he used an astronomical theory to prove whether what Saint Matthew the Evangelist wrote in his gospel was true.

Professor Larson's investigation could never have been conducted prior to the age of information because it required super-computer technology. Through his research he produced the image of the night sky in Bethlehem as it appeared on the first Christmas.

In his thesis Professor Larson wrote: "If the star was part of the natural order, and our solar system and the universe is like a great clock—mathematically precise and predictable—then that means that the star of Bethlehem was a clockwork star, and that of course means that God built the star into the structure of the universe from the beginning of time."

This story has a happy ending for most, but not for all. The House of Herod was never the same after the visit from the magi.

The historian Josephus writes a grim narrative of the degeneration of the aging despot in his final days.

Herod overdosed, but not before killing his wife, her mother, and three of his sons, and remained obsessed over the truth that the newborn king of the Jews was a rising star even as Herod's own messianic dream collapsed like a supernova.

When Herod did die he was buried—in all places—at Bethlehem. How much more disparaged would the king have been to learn that his final resting place was the site where the actual king of the Jews was born! (Mt 2:25; Lk 1:35).

Herod would not go gently into that good night, couldn't resist another parting shot, issued a final directive to his soldiers. "Rousen up your bows, boys, and sharpen your swords, then go, search diligently for the child."

TO BE CONTINUED (Mt 2:13-18)

This contribution is available at <http://thegonzohomilist.blogspot.com/2015/01/whence-magi-baby-youre-gonna-be-star.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

March For Life 2015 Surprise [at Peace Garden Mama]

I'm still recovering from the March for Life 2015 trip,
and what a trip it was!



This post is going to be visual heavy, but I have to share at least some of it verbally. There was so much more than the March but I'll focus on that only today.

First off, the Plan A didn't happen. I was slated to be interviewed on EWTN about the book I helped write

that is coming out next month. Mass before the March meant I had to hustle to the EWTN tent and wait my turn.

It was fascinating watching the pro-life bigwigs come in and, one by one, step into the spotlight with EWTN host Teresa Tomeo. I was pumped up and ready to go.



But as time wore on, doubts took hold. I was conflicted between standing there much longer and joining our North Dakota crew, whom I could see just across the way stationed in front of the main stage, where our spokesperson, Shanley senior Julia Johnson, was set to give a talk to the throngs of people gathered.

Finally, things began gearing up and I saw the organizer say to Teresa, "We're done." She wanted to know if they could do a few more interviews to record for later, but the answer came: no. It wasn't going to work.

So off I went, grabbing everything I'd need for the main event. My disappointment was there, but fleeting as I worked through the crowd, nervous now that I wouldn't make it to the front of the line in time to march with our large brood. Thousands were gathering and I kept losing my fellow North Dakotans also heading that way as we wove in and out of the bustling bunch.

But at least I knew my chances of finding them this year would be better than any other. Just head to the front! Finally, I found them, and we were just minutes from starting off. I raised my camera to take a photo and...what? "Full Card." I was out of room! But God's grace flowed in through a fellow parent-photographer friend, Gretchen, who just happened to have extras. "Thank you Jesus," I'm pretty sure I said out loud.

And then, at the cue, we were off!





I was planning on being somewhere near the front, I'd hoped, but within a short amount of time, a few of us parents had somehow been pulled into the media circle ahead of the front line.



Could this really be happening? Would I be allowed to stay here? Not in my wildest dreams would I have thought I'd be not only up front but in front of the front. I snapped away, one photo after the other, knowing that this was indeed a moment in my life that would stand out as a highlight.







The other parents who'd gotten lucky with me and I couldn't stop smiling. We were elated at being able to see the up close glimpse of our kids, and the smiles on their faces as they marched and chanted. Their joy was something to behold.



As we approached the big hill leading to the capitol and the Supreme Court steps, we ran ahead further so we could get a bird's eye view shot. We were giddy, ecstatic, so incredibly excited. This would be the pivotal moment and our best chance to see the whole march.



The police and their motorcycle brigade were like body guards to our line of hundreds of thousands of pro-lifers. And the scene from on high? Just as spectacular as we'd imagined.



At the top, the air shifted...



Soon, we realized something was going on up ahead. A small group of protesters -- 50 to 100 in all -- had gathered to block us.



They had signs, too, declaring their opposition to what we were doing. But so did Kristan Hawkins, Students for Life of America executive director, who stepped in to lead the students in positive chants to distract the protestors. Since the protestors didn't have permits like we did to march in the streets, at least eight of their most defiant were arrested.





My 14-year-old witnessed much of this, while I stayed near our group, which waited calmly for the police to give us the green light to continue.



At the conclusion, we all met at the capitol steps for the customary group photo. And a short time after that, Senator John Hoeven stopped by to say hello, and bring a few giggles to our tired crew.



One of my favorite moments was this one, when at the conclusion of this incredible event, I had a moment to catch up with my daughter and give her a little squeeze. I'm so glad we experienced this together, even if for some of the time we were separated. We will always have this memory to share with one another.



I'm still pinching myself over how Plan A eluded me, but Plan B? Oh, it was even better. Having a chance to be part of the most vibrant energy of the March by being at the lead -- even before the lead -- was beyond exciting. I didn't forget to thank God for the beautiful chance He put before me when my own plan floated away.

He has it all in hand, and it's good. Very good. And just like the motto of this year's March: "Every life is a gift!" A good and precious treasure.

Q4U: Did you catch any of the March for Life coverage or read any of the reports afterwards?

What did you notice? What did you think?

This contribution is available at <http://roxanesalonen.blogspot.com/2015/01/meaningful-mondays-march-for-life-2015.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Why we choose Catholic schools: A letter to our son [at Catholic Review]

It's Catholic Schools Week! Hooray for Catholic schools! This year I invited other bloggers to share their posts on why we love Catholic schools. You'll find their blogs below. I look forward to hearing from you about your thoughts on and experiences with Catholic schools.



A letter to our son as he gets ready for kindergarten

Dear Daniel,

Next year most of your friends will be going to public school. You wonder why you won't be at the same schools they are going to. Public schools are nice schools with good teachers, and your friends will probably be happy. Many of them will ride school buses—which I know you'd love. You'll all learn how to read and write stories and do math and science.

But your school will be a little different. You'll be going to a Catholic school. And so, along with everything else you learn, you'll be learning something extra, and in a different kind of place.

In your Catholic school you'll learn about God and how much He loves you. You'll talk to Jesus throughout the day. You'll dress as a saint for All Saints Day. You'll go to Mass. When something bad happens in the world or someone dies, you'll be able to talk about it and pray about it.

Your father and I hope our faith will always bring you comfort and strength.

You'll also learn about serving others. You'll make cheese sandwiches and bring in canned goods for people who are hungry. You'll collect money for blankets to send to people in need. You'll see that you can make a difference in our world through both prayer and action.

You'll be a member of a community that works together and looks out for one another. When you're in middle school, you'll help set up chairs for assemblies, and you'll be a buddy to a kindergartener yourself. But let's not rush things here.

Yes, you can get a good education without going to a Catholic school. You can also learn to love God without going to a Catholic school. What your father and I want most for you, however, is for you to grow up to be a man with a good heart, a love for others and Jesus.

We are so blessed to have you as our son, and we want you to become all God wants you to be. And we believe your Catholic school will help us give you all that and more.

Love,

Mama

1/24/2015 11:50:05 PM

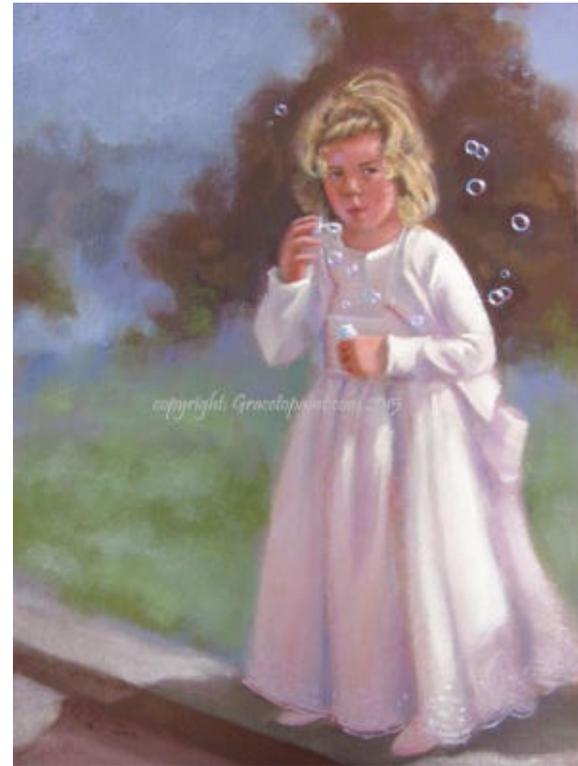
By

| [Contents](#) |

Bridal Bubbles [at Grace to Paint]

by Maresa Lilley, SND on [January 28, 2015](#) · [0 comments](#)

in [Paintings](#)



9×12" oil paint on canvas panel; use "comment" below to inquire.

The small girl is now finished, and if you compare to yesterday's posting, you can see that the fine detail went last. I am still thinking about the background. I may yet adjust color a bit.

This contribution is available at <http://www.gracetopaint.com/2015/01/28/bridal-bubbles-finished/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Random New Year Thoughts [at V for Victory!]



This four-day weekend after a high-octane December seems a good opportunity to regale the world with my ruminations.

-- 2015 is my 20th year living in Idaho. That is almost half my life. But, while you can take the girl out of Southern California, you can't take Southern California out of the girl. We simply did not have winter in SoCal, where 50 degrees is bundle-up weather. Winter is therefore a great trial for me, even after all these years, many of which were in the Idaho Panhandle, where ice and snow are far more plentiful than in the Treasure Valley.

-- Given which, I would need a damn good reason to venture out in freezing weather for New Year's. Which brings us to Boise's answer to the Times Square Ball Drop: the New Year's Eve Potato Drop. We do not have a Times Square or a ball. What we have got is a giant foam potato hanging from a boom crane, lit by two or three blue and green laser lights; a guy in a potato suit; and, presumably, to gin up the applause, a bottomless supply of booze and perhaps other, less legal stimulants. When I first saw a picture of the potato on the news, I was struck by its almost exact resemblance to the evidence in a prison contraband case I just handled. Sorry, but this does not constitute a damn good reason sufficient to justify braving the cold on New Year's.

-- Challis, Idaho started out the new year with a 4.9 magnitude earthquake. It was reportedly felt clear in the North End of Boise. I live in Boise, but not in the North End. I did not feel anything. An earthquake, for those who have never been in one, is quite unmistakable, no matter how weak. It is qualitatively different from, say, construction in the area or a heavy truck driving by. If you're not sure whether you have ever felt an earthquake, you probably haven't. -- My patroness for 2015 is St. Ann, mother of the

Mother of God. Although she is my namesake, I have neglected her most of my life. I have been thinking about her lately, and at midnight adoration on New Year's I started a novena to her. While preparing our New Year's Day dinner, one of my lay Dominican sisters showed me a little statue she acquired at a thrift store. It was St. Ann instructing her immaculate daughter on Scripture. A sign?

-- As we enter the new year, it is increasingly clear that the majority of priests and bishops in our time are hirelings. Sorry, but there is no getting around this and it's time to face up to it. These hirelings -- most of whom were ordained in the '60s, '70s and '80s -- bear the heavy responsibility for having spent the last half-century (a) trying to transform the Church into something entirely unrecognizable from what she had previously been, and (b) propagandizing the laity into thinking this is a good thing. Like the process by which a tree trunk is transformed into a piece of stone by the gradual replacement of its organic components with minerals, this attempt to re-invent the Church has transformed the hearts of her members into stone by gradually replacing their Catholic faith with the minerals of socialism, pop psychology, materialism, narcissism and a host of other evils, until they no longer recognize their plight. Fortunately, most of the current generations of hirelings have not got many more active years left; but, absent an intervention by the Holy Spirit -- which we are not close to deserving -- it will take a long time to undo their damage.

-- If you don't know how to recognize a hireling, here are just a few signs: (1) he can't stick to the Missal at Mass, or to the forms of other Sacraments, but must always interject his own comments and/or improvisations. (2) He preaches errors from the pulpit. (If you can't recognize errors preached from the pulpit, get yourself a copy of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* and get busy.) (3) He treats being a priest like an ordinary job. (4) He devotes little time to prayer or actual ministry; he seldom darkens the door of a church or chapel, or makes himself available to administer the Sacraments. The former deficiency will be harder for the laity to discern than the latter; but if he denigrates or makes fun of popular prayers and devotions like the Rosary, that is a clue. (5) He has a great love of humanity in general, but little use for human beings in particular; therefore, he treats particular people with coldness and even rudeness.

-- In 2015, Benedict XVI will turn 88. If he dies while Francis is still the reigning Pope, I fear what will happen to the liturgical reforms he began. -- Shortly before the close of the old year, I started reading [*The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Civil War*](#). Of course, it is a pro-Confederate book, which is what makes it politically incorrect, since conventional "wisdom" has the Confederacy pegged as a bunch of racist neanderthals. The book makes some good points and gives rise to some considerations that give one pause. For one thing -- and despite embarrassing sentiments like the one articulated by Confederate Vice-President Alexander Stephens to the effect that the Confederate government was founded upon the "great truth" that the Negro is not equal to the White Man -- Dixie was not All About Slavery, any more than the North was All About Abolition. Dixie, for all her faults, was also about a lot of things the world is much poorer for having less of: honor; chivalry; faith; subsidiarity; the worth of the individual and the family. The North, on the other hand, was already imbued with the pragmatic utilitarianism that now dominates our own age -- thanks in large part to the North's conquest of the the South. To this conquest we may also, I think, trace the destruction of the several states as buffers and defenses against an overreaching and domineering federal government, to whose influence no aspect of our lives is now immune. And then there is the concept of total war, as put into practice by Union generals, most notably Grant, Sherman and Sheridan. The evil, racist, backward, slave-holding South, on the other hand, did not practice total war. Jefferson Davis and Robert E. Lee rejected the idea of deliberately making war on civilians.

-- It is worth noting, by the way, that in his celebrated and unabashedly pro-Union series on the Civil War, Ken Burns was careful to make clear the unpopularity *in the North* of abolition as a cause to fight for. As for Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation (which did not in fact free the slaves), it was decried *in the*

North, not merely by Jefferson Davis. -- Speaking of Jefferson Davis, have you never been struck by his close physical resemblance to Abraham Lincoln? -- And speaking of Lincoln: recall that he said, in his Second Inaugural, that the Civil War was God's judgment on the entire country for the sin of slavery. About 620,000 American soldiers died in the Civil War -- almost a quarter of a million more than died in World War II. In this country, we enter the new year stained with the blood of nearly as many aborted babies as the total number of dead from all countries in World War II. If it is true that 620,000 dead was the price we paid for the institution of slavery, what must be the punishment that awaits us for abortion? -- And then there are the micro-conflicts. A small incident over the holidays got me to thinking about what it really means to win or to lose. There are times when one wins by losing, and times when one loses by winning. For example, if you engage in a contest of wills with someone who truly wants the best for you, you cannot win except by losing. Of course, you must be able to recognize those persons who truly want the best for you; and the key is to know what it means for someone to want the best. It does not mean what a lot of people think it means. It means the opposite of what the world means. Ultimately, it means that person wants you to be eternally happy in heaven, even at the expense of your temporal and transitory happiness on earth.

May your New Year be filled with the best, and may it lead you to eternal happiness.

This contribution is available at <http://v-forvictory.blogspot.com/2015/01/random-new-year-thoughts.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Boko Haram: Slavery, Death, and Love [at A Catholic Citizen in America]

Muslims are still upset about those 'Mohammed' cartoons in Charlie Hebdo.

That, I think, is understandable. Being upset is not an excuse for killing folks, though. (

[January 11, 2015](#)

)

I'm upset when my faith gets described as 'worshipping a cookie.' I was angry about a college professor's photo of a consecrated Host, a page from the Quran, and another book's page: treated as garbage. For that matter, I felt disgust when a preacher burned the Quran. (

[July 20, 2012](#)

;

[April 1, 2011](#)

;

[March 5, 2010](#)

)

Some of that comes from spending my youth in the '60s. When I became a Catholic, however, seeing humanity as one big family was no longer an option: it's a requirement. (

[Genesis 10:1](#)

-

[32](#)

; Catechism,

[360](#)

,

[396](#)



-
409

)
It's easy to

[demonize](#)

those who believe, act, or simply look, different. That doesn't make it right.

Charlie Hebdo, 20 Dead: Northeastern Nigeria, Thousands Dead



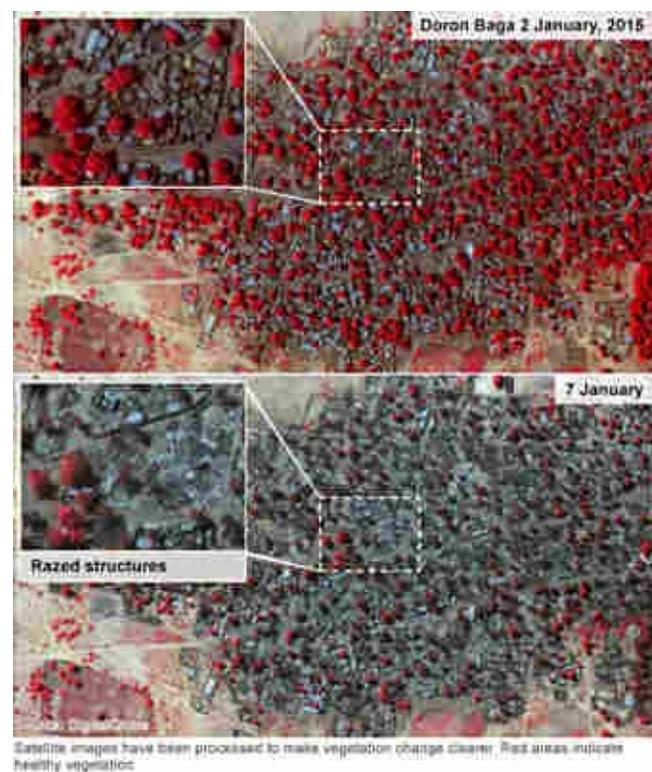
(From AP, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)

("

Baga, seen here in April 2013, has been the scene of previous clashes between Boko Haram and the army

"

(BBC News))



(From Digital Globe, via BBC News, used w/o permission.)

(Satellite images of

[Baga](#)

, a town in northeastern Nigeria, before and after a Boko Haram attack

.)

The last time I counted, 20 folks died in the Charlie Hebdo offices, or as a result of that attack.

That's a tragic loss of life.

So, I think, are the recent deaths of 2,000 or so folks: killed by Boko Haram in Nigeria. (The Independent (UK) (

[January 11, 2015](#)

))

A key phrase there is "or so." Officials and others in Nigeria have earned a reputation for being — inaccurate, at best. (BBC News (

[January 13, 2015](#)

))

Boko Haram is an Islamic outfit: by their standards, anyway.

"Boko haram" means "Western education is forbidden" in

[Hausa](#)

. Boko Haram opposed Western education, started military operations to create an Islamic state in 2009, and has killed thousands. The United States started calling Boko Haram a terrorist group in 2013. About 3,000,000 folks are affected by this lot. (

[BBC News](#)

)

Boko Haram achieved international fame last year, when they kidnapped more than 200 schoolgirls from a

[Chibok boarding school](#)

.

Boko Haram's assertion that the girls were "war booty," and would be sold as slaves, may be a mistranslation. Even so, what happened was not good.

A

[Wikipedia](#)

page says that some of the girls were married to Boko Haram members — for a 'bride price' of 2,000

[Nigerian niara](#)

a head. That's about \$12.50 USD, or £7.50. (BBC News (

[November 14, 2014](#)

;

[May 20, 2014](#)

;

[May 12, 2014](#)

;

[May 15, 2013](#)

))

I'm angry about what Boko Haram does, and think what they are doing is very wrong. But I try to not hate them: and will not make claims about their souls. I really don't need that kind of trouble.

Love and Conscience

My faith's basics are simple: love God, love my neighbors, see everyone as my neighbor, and treat others as I'd like to be treated. (

[Matthew 5:43](#)

-

[44](#)

,

[7:12](#)

,

[22:36](#)

-

[40](#)

,

[Mark 12:28](#)

-

[31](#)

;

[Luke 6:31](#) [10:25](#)

-

[27](#)

,

[29](#)

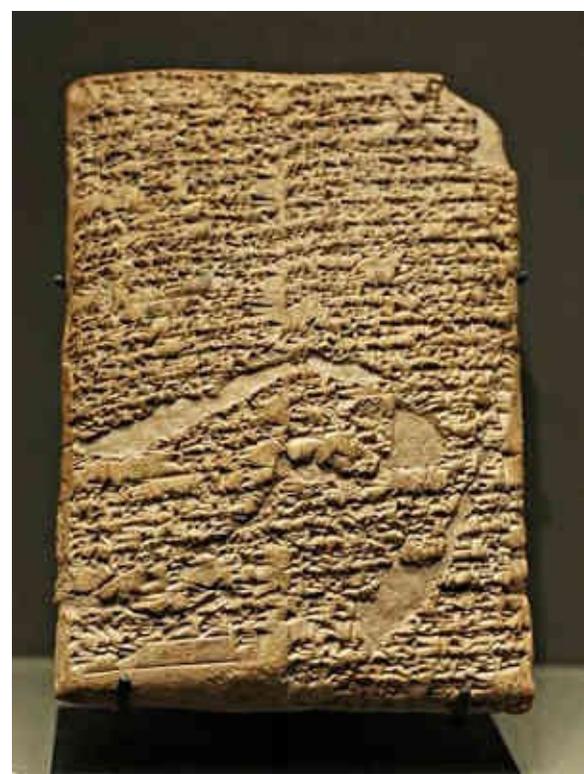
-

[37](#)

; Catechism of the Catholic Church,

[1789](#)

)



I don't have to

like

my neighbor: but hating a neighbor is not an option. (

[August 26, 2014](#)

;

[December 9, 2010](#)

)

Judging whether an act is good or bad is part of using my conscience: it's a basic requirement for being human. We're even expected to think about the actions of others. (Catechism,

[1778](#)

,

[2401](#)

-

[2449](#)

)

Maybe that sounds 'judgmental:' but I'm not loving my neighbor, if I see nothing wrong with someone stealing my neighbor's lawn mower: or selling my neighbor's child.

This isn't the 'my way or the highway' sort of self-righteous I occasionally run into. It's a matter hating the sin, loving the sinner: and leaving the judging of persons to God. (Catechism,

[1861](#)

)

Laws and customs are always changing. What doesn't change are the underlying ethical principles they reflect: or fail to follow. I've talked about law, positive and natural, before. (

[August 31, 2014](#)

;

[August 29, 2014](#)

)

'Loving my neighbor' has to matter. I'm expected to:

- Support religious freedom
(Catechism of the Catholic Church, [2104-2109](#))
 - For **everybody**
(Catechism, [2106](#))
- Take an active part in public life
(Catechism, [1915](#))
- Contribute to the good of society
 - In a spirit of
 - Truth
 - Justice
 - Solidarity
 - Freedom
(Catechism, [2239](#))
- Submit to legitimate authorities
 - Refuse obedience to civil authorities
 - When their demands are contrary to those of an upright conscience
(Catechism, [2242](#))
(Catechism, [2239](#))
([November 4, 2012](#))

I could be overwhelmed by guilt at the thought that I haven't ended poverty, cured cancer, and achieved a lasting peace in the Middle East.

I could also believe that I can "...leap tall buildings in a single bound..." — but that would be crazy.

Humility, Catholic style, is having a balanced view of my abilities: or lack of them, and that's another topic. (

[August 10, 2014](#)

)

Happily, I'm expected to do what I can: not what I can't.

"As far as possible citizens should take an active part in public life. The manner of this participation may vary from one country or culture to another..."

(Catechism, [1915](#)) [emphasis mine]

Making Sense





(From From Buz lightning, via Wikimedia Commons,

used w/o permission.)

("

Branford Clarke illustration in The Ku Klux Klan In Prophecy 1925 by Bishop Alma White published by the Pillar of Fire Church in Zarephath, NJ

"

(Wikimedia Commons))

Seeing folks who are different as a threat isn't unique to the Pillar of Fire Church in the 1920s.

I think it's involved in the "

[God Hates You](#)

" church's beliefs, the 2011 Norwegian mass murders, and folks who call Muslims "towelheads" — or blame Western civilization for the world's problems.



I'm also pretty sure that those folks aren't typical examples of Protestants, Norwegians, Americans, or whatever. (

[July 23, 2011](#)

;

[June 14, 2011](#)

)

I also think these folks make sense:

"...The birth of South Sudan was welcomed with high jubilations: mainly the years of slavery, persecution of Christians and oppression has gone, but also hopes of new beginning, of development and provision of essential services. In fact, the two Sudans and rest of the African nations are faced by enormous challenges such as nation building, healing wounds of our painful pasts and present, managing the expectations of our people, withstanding international investors who do not care about the safety and wellbeing of the local people...."

(Monsignor Edward Hilboro Kussala, Bishop of Tombura-Yambio (Sudan))

"...Despite the impression often given by the world media, I want to stress that Christians in Nigeria do not see themselves as being under any massive persecution by Muslims. Our population of about 160 million is made up of Christians and Muslims in equal number and influence. We have not done too badly in living peacefully together in the same nation. We believe we have learnt some lessons which may be useful for the rest of the world on Christian-Muslim relations...."

Monsignor John Olorunfemi Onaiyekan; Archbishop of Abuja, Nigeria

"...A more Nuanced perspective on the Boko Haram phenomenon in Nigeria:

"Interesting to note is the fact that not only Christians have lost their lives from the bombs and bullets unleashed by Boko Haram. But even a good number of Muslims too, as some statistical data show.

"It is not every Muslim who cherishes what Boko Haram is seeking to perpetuate in Nigerian.[!] Many admire the Christian virtues of Love and peace, which they claim are equally enshrined in the Koran.

"Many of our Muslim brothers and sisters long to convert to the Christian faith but cannot achieve this, for fear of losing their lives...."

Monsignor John Ebebe Ayah, Bishop of Ogoja (Nigeria)

("XIII Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops" (October 7-28, 2012))

More recently, the Vatican's representative in Geneva talked about recent high-profile examples of slavery: and some that aren't so obvious. (

[September 9, 2014](#)

)

Things Take Time

Slavery, treating others as if they're property, is a bad idea: and we shouldn't do it. (Catechism,

[2414](#)

)

Expecting slavery to disappear overnight isn't reasonable.

After 19 centuries of passing along 'love God, love your neighbor, everyone's your neighbor: quite a few folks in some countries decided that owning other people was wrong. I'd be surprised — astounded — if

everybody

suddenly followed suit. (

[October 26, 2014](#)

;

[May 6, 2012](#)

)

Remarkably, western Africa's national leaders seem to be giving serious thought to working together to remove Boko Haram from their territories. And that's yet another topic.

Meanwhile, we'll keep passing along the best news humanity's ever had: that God loves us, and wants to adopt us: all of us. (

[John 3:17](#)

; Catechism,

[52](#)

,

[1825](#)

)

And that's yet again another topic. (

[November 16, 2014](#)

;

[August 5, 2011](#)

)

More about living in a big world:

- ["Charlie Hebdo, Chick Tracts, and Getting a Grip"](#)
(January 11, 2015)
Particularly
- ["Love is Mandatory, 'Like' is Optional: Praying for Peace in Iraq"](#)
(August 26, 2014)

- "['All are Equal Before God' — Rights of Humanity and a Right of the Aggressor](#)"
(August 24, 2014)
- "[Remembering 9/11, Living in a Big World](#)"
(September 11, 2014)
Particularly
- "[South Sudan, the Táin Bó Cúalnge, and Working for a Better World](#)"
(January 6, 2012)
Particularly

Background:

- From the Vatican
- Op-ed
- News
 - "[Charlie Hebdo: Niger protesters set churches on fire](#)"
BBC News (January 17, 2015)
 - "[West African leaders mull new force to fight Boko Haram insurgents](#)"
Matthew Mpoke Bigg, Kwasi Kpodo, ACCRA; Reuters (January 16, 2015)
 - "[Charlie Hebdo: 'Four dead' in Niger protest](#)"
BBC News (January 16, 2015)
 - "[Nigeria's Boko Haram: Baga destruction 'shown in images'](#) "
BBC News (January 15, 2015)
 - "[Boko Haram crisis: Nigerian archbishop accuses West](#)"
BBC News (January 12, 2015)
 - "[Nigeria's forgotten massacre: 2,000 slaughtered by Boko Haram, but the West is failing to help](#)"
The Independent (UK) (January 11, 2015)

This contribution is available at <http://catholiccitizenamerica.blogspot.com/2015/01/boko-haram-slavery-death-and-love.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Traditional Liturgy In Its Post-Vatican II Form - 6: What Went Wrong? [at Monks and Mermaids]



[Liturgy in its post-Vatican II form iv EP4](#)



[my quotations etc from Pope Benedict are largely taken from a talk by Helen Hull Hitchcock](#) Before we can answer the question, "What went wrong?" we must answer several false accusations against the "new" rite, because many conservatives grasp any rumour that is going, accept any accusation as long as it discredits the post-Vatican II mass. Here are a few false accusations.

That the post-Vatican II liturgy is Protestant: In the previous articles in this series, I think we have demonstrated how careful the liturgists were in their choice of texts, how anxious they were to open up to Latin Catholics the very best of Catholic Tradition. There is not a single Protestant word in the whole revision. They were motivated by fidelity to Tradition, while accepting that the almost world-wide spread of the Latin Rite made it imperative, in the name of Catholic Tradition itself, to make it open to influences from the whole treasury of Catholic Tradition, which is made up of a number of traditions, each every bit as Catholic as the Latin tradition, all of which are of great value because they too are the product of grace

That the liturgy is the work of an interested group that imposed changes not envisaged by the Council which were imposed on a reluctant Church.

Stories of dirty tricks abounded during the Council on all sides of the debate. It is only the "conservatives" that have kept this going to the present day. It is likely that dirty tricks were employed as each side struggled for advantage to sway the Council in one way or another; but certain things must be borne in mind.

I was studying at Fribourg from September 1961 till the end of 1963. Of course, the Council was matter for lively debate. The English Benedictines studying at Fribourg started a quarterly journal called "Trident", mainly to get all the press releases from the Vatican; and we used to invite participants who were going to or from the Council to tea in my room, and they normally came. We discussed all kinds of hot topics. Here are a few examples.

There was in the Council a number of sub-commissions on different aspects of liturgical reform. A member of the sub-commission on **concelebration** was our Professor Hanggi (with an umlaut) of liturgy who gave us a talk on concelebration, both the history and the present possibilities. He described how it would eventually look, and he was right in all details. This was after the second session - very early indeed!

It was the Melkite bishops who proposed that the liturgy should be in the language of the people. They also proposed that **the eucharistic prayer should contain the epiclesis**. I remember the discussion with liturgists, firstly that the epiclesis should be placed in the Roman Canon; and, this being rejected on the ground that the Roman Canon is complete in itself, and that to inject an epiclesis into the Canon would do violence to it, the prospect of one or more eucharistic prayers containing the epiclesis, was discussed. I went to the ecumenical monastery of Chevetogne in Belgium where I heard for the first time the need to have more than one eucharistic prayer in order to save for the Church something from the Mozarabic, Gallican and other rites that had been swamped by the relentless advance of the Roman practice. All this was long before Bugnini headed the Consilium, during the first half of the Council.

Later, when the Consilium discussed these subjects, they went through an identical process: the results you know. Moreover, according to Archimandrite Robert Taft S.J., the eminent liturgical historian, every change was presented to the world's bishops; and, when the proposed change produced much opposition, it was dropped.

I even remember discussing **the priest presiding from the other side of the altar** - we had seen it in the Protestant Communion service in Taize - a Protestant service with a Catholic theology. The reason given was not that priest and people could look at each other, but that both priest and people would have an

unhindered view of the altar, the focal point of the whole action. All this was during the first half of the Council, and had nothing to do with Bugnini. These discussions were not between crazy lefties, but responsible people. What came out at the end of the process was largely faithful to what we heard and talked about early on. There were no surprises.

All these changes were done when Pope Paul VI was ill, too ill to concentrate on what was happening: it was done behind his back. He was co-composer of Eucharistic Prayer III with Dom Cipriano Vagaggini, was responsible for the short sentences - Milan-style - for the Offertory, and involved himself in many a discussion. Those who are against the changes just don't want to own up to the fact that they are out of step with the Church.

A very good history of what happened after the Council in the *Consilium* that is responsible for the texts has been given by [Dom Cassian Folsom](#), Prior of the Benedictine monastery in Norcia, Italy. I am sure that he and I do not see eye-to-eye on many things liturgical, but think his history of the post-conciliar work of this commission is very good and objective. The fact that his account is very different from mine shows just how big the whole affair was, and that everything depends on where you were and with whom you talked. I give you the truth; so does he; but for the *whole* truth, we will have to wait for the historians. Nevertheless, I believe he is actually wrong on one point, and I think that Fr Louis Bouyer has demonstrated it. He writes on the reasons for the new eucharistic prayers:

4. Theological Shift to the "Horizontal": Part of the post-conciliar theological shift was a new stress on this-worldly realities, which often resulted in a style of prayer which was decidedly horizontal and man-centered. The hieratic, sacral and transcendent emphasis of the Roman canon, in contrast, was viewed as out of date and theologically incorrect. This is a fourth reason for the change from one Eucharistic Prayer to many."

The names most associated with the authorship of the new eucharistic prayers are Louis Bouyer and Cyprian Vagaggini. The first resigned from the *Consilium* in protest because of the lack of a sense of transcendence, and also wrote a book on Monasticism as a sign of transcendence; while the second finished his days in a Camaldolese hermitage: hardly people who would be guilty of underestimating transcendence!!

I believe Fr Cassian is reading back into the prayers an interpretation of events that belongs to a later date, to the time when the "new Mass" was presented to the world. It is a true interpretation of what happened when people began to celebrate the "new Mass" "in the spirit of Vatican II;" but I don't think you will find a single phrase in any of the three new eucharistic prayers to support Fr Cassian's view. Those who composed them lived in a different world and had totally different motives from both the "liberals" who won the publicity war after the Council and from the "New Liturgical Movement" that Fr Cassian Folsom seems to support.

Ressourcement theology

To understand Vatican II you need to understand *ressourcement* theology which was an ad hoc, unplanned reality that formed itself in France after World War II without knowing that this is what they were doing, a group of theologians that were very concerned with the gradual disappearance of religion among the masses, that agreed about the general causes, blamed the inadequacy of current Catholic theology for its inability to cope with this tendency, and looked for its own solutions in Catholic Tradition. Also, without fully realizing its significance for the history of the Church was their friendship with Russian theologians

in exile, living in France, highly critical of theological tendencies in their own Church, identifying their main foe as a certain western scholasticism that had infected the East, and looked for the solution in Tradition. The two sides, French and Russian, were surprised that they were agreed on the problems, identified the inadequacies of the same western scholasticism with its inability to cope with modern life, and found the solution in Tradition, even though this Tradition looked different from the perspective of each side. The Orthodox looked to St Gregory Palamas, while the Catholics looked to western Fathers like Ambrose and Augustine, but also looked at the Eastern fathers as well. Neither side was conscious of having crossed any line, nor even that it was itself a school of thought, neither side represented anybody but themselves, and neither side was trying to unite East and West. Perhaps, because they were not trying to do anything in particular, their defences were down, and they had an influence on each other that would not have been the case if their conversations had been more self-conscious. Vatican II changed all that; and, thanks to them, much Orthodox thinking has entered the mainstream of Catholic theology. The basic insights of *ressourcement* I have borrowed from Wiki:

For the Catholic theologians associated with *ressourcement* or *nouvelle théologie* "Henri de Lubac, Jean Daniélou, Yves Congar, and Hans Urs von Balthasar (among others)" the preeminent source for theological reflection is the word of God interpreted within the Church. In a secondary sense, the theologians of the tradition, especially the Fathers of the Church, represent abiding sources for the renewal of Christian theology.

Accordingly, the project of *ressourcement* involved translating and interpreting texts from across the entire tradition, with particular attention given to the ever present fruitfulness of patristic exegesis. As de Lubac suggests, this task precluded "any overly preferential attachment to one school, system, or definite age; it demanded more attention to the deep and permanent unity of the faith, to the mysterious relationship (which escapes so many specialized scholars) of all those who invoke the name of Christ."

We have seen in the previous articles in this series how the application of the principles has transformed the Roman Rite, because *ressourcement* theology looks to the whole of Tradition and not just to the Roman strand of it. Nevertheless, it is just those people mentioned above, the greater part of them, who are dissatisfied with the liturgy as it now is celebrated. Why [Michael Deem](#) writes about one of the very central and basic insights of *ressourcement* theology in general and of Henri de Lubac in particular:

In a rarely quoted essay from 1942, de Lubac writes: "Now, basically, this world is not by itself either sacred or secular, for it receives its significance only through man. It can become one or the other according to the way in which man behaves in its regard." [3]

At the heart of de Lubac's theology is a concern to re-establish in the consciousness of humanity the Christian principle that the sacred—the presence of God's saving activity—is not some foreign, invading force in an otherwise mundane, secular world. Rather, nature is always incomplete and unfulfilled without the gratuitous sanctification wrought by grace, and it is peculiar to human nature to release the full splendor of the grace given to it. For de Lubac, as for the Fathers, anthropology and ecclesiology are fully intelligible only in light of one another.

It is a pity that this essay is rarely quoted because it is a key to so much. I have only seen references to it, but it illumined many French theological minds at the time, and its echoes are still being heard. What Henri de Lubac said is that the main reason for the lack of religion in the industrial cities of France and the modern world is the absence of any opportunity for people in these cities to encounter the sacred.

Without this, religion dies. The liturgy should provide a sense of the sacred, but it is too clerical and in a foreign language: it needs to be reformed so that people can participate and so encounter the Sacred. This was the motive why these theologians and liturgists were so enthusiastic for reform. This is why you can see their signature in the Constitution on the Liturgy. This is why Father Louis Bouyer and others wrote the new eucharistic prayers - Fr Cassian Folsom is totally wrong on this one - and this is the reason why Father Louis Bouyer resigned from the *Consilium* and why the *ressourcement* theologians were so bitterly disappointed at the final result. Everything was going their way, the constitution and the eucharistic prayers, and then, another group with another agenda took over. Perhaps, in order to succeed, the *ressourcement* theologians needed to die.

The newspapers divided the Council fathers into two, easily distinguished parties, the "conservatives" who opposed change, and the progressives who sought change. In this they did not do justice to either group, but it sold newspapers. In the "progressive" group there were two main parties, not noticed at the time, but visible to any one who looked at the scene with a sharp, theological analysis - I confess that I failed that test. If you look at them in general terms, you could be excused for not noticing the differences between them.

Both groups were very keen on ecumenism, hence both groups sent representatives to the same ecumenical meetings; but, as time went on, differences emerged.

If you were to ask the *ressourcement* theologians, who is their ideal ecumenical partner, the answer would have been clear and immediate, the Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox Churches. Firstly, these churches are churches of Tradition, that product of the synergy between the Holy Spirit and the Church which has its source in the Eucharistic assembly and in which Truth can be found; and, secondly, because they have preserved liturgies whose sacred character is successfully imparted to those who take part.

Thus, if you were to ask the French *ressourcement* theologians what living liturgies they would look to in order to help them form a Latin rite Mass with more participation, then I think they would have looked East. This means that the modern "monks and nuns of Bethlehem" and the "monastic family of Jerusalem" probably celebrate the liturgy more like Father Bouyer and company originally intended. However, there are "progressives" for whom Tradition is of secondary importance, and for whom conformity to the modern world is paramount. For them, their ideal ecumenical partner is the Anglican Church. If they looked at examples of modern liturgy to help them form a Latin rite Mass with greater participation, they tend to look at Anglican and other Protestant models. I suppose Hans Kung is the most famous example. We must look at the modern human being, see what makes him tick, what are his chief concerns, and mould our message to his needs. Their response to the *ressourcement* theologians is that you cannot drive a car forward while only looking in the back mirror.

Modern human beings do not appreciate the "sacred", but they do respond to the challenge of human solidarity. Therefore, to modernise the liturgy, we take the emphasis away from the "sacred" and put it on celebrating human togetherness in Christ. And this is what they did. Much of their support came from the fact that observers did not see the difference between the two groups.

People intent on modernizing the Church were in the majority in the *Consilium* that produced the new liturgy. Because they left the writing of the new eucharistic prayers to the professionals, all things went well, and the prayers were formed according to strict *Ressourcement* principles. They tended to outvote the same professionals, so that, not so much the text, but the general presentation of the new liturgy was all about our oneness in Christ, all too human solidarity that forgot that "in Christ" means finding unity with each other on earth by sharing a close relationship with Christ, Our Lady and the saints in heaven. That part of the Constitution on the Liturgy that says that our participation in the liturgy on earth is a sharing in the heavenly liturgy tended to be forgotten. Too often, the sense of the sacred, of the *mysterium tremendum*, went completely out of the window.

Conservatives, like the blog "Rorate Caeli" and bloggers like "Fr z" still don't see the difference

between the two groups; and when they see people like Pope Benedict reacting against the "new Mass", they believe he is on their side, when, in fact, he is a disappointed *ressourcement* theologian. He was very bitter at first and talked about all that he worked for was in ruins, real liturgy, even though it needed reform, being replaced by an artificial construct, the work of intellectuals. Like Pere Bouyer, one of the main objects of his ire was "Mass facing the people," which became the symbol of togetherness with each other replacing the "sacred", a man-centred liturgy as opposed to a God-centred liturgy. Remember that they put the wholesale loss of faith in industrial towns down to the loss of the "sacred", and they had centred their hopes on a reform of the liturgy that would unlock the "sacred" to be experienced by the masses. The general falling away from Catholicism of people from western Europe and North America after the changes only re-inforced their conviction.

Pope Benedict dedicated much of his pontificate to try to repair the damage. Before we look at his contribution, we must be aware of some things: 1) He is German and not French, so he had not experienced the close relationship with Orthodox that his French colleagues had. However, he was heir to the rich liturgical traditions of Bavaria which includes wonderful feast day Masses sung to Mozart and other great composers, with full orchestra; and he was heir as well to the liturgical movement inspired by the great German, highly theological Benedictine monasteries and with such names as Dom Odo Casel, the Canon Regular Parsch, and the Jesuit Jungmann. He was western European, and was satisfied that the Latin rite should make use of its own resources to reform. 2) He is not a liturgist and was not privy to the reasons why the liturgists had done what they did. During and after the Council, he was occupied in other things. Thus his criticisms do not show any acquaintance with their motives, and sometimes he attributes motives to them that they did not have. 3) He and Archbishop Wojtyla did join the group of French theologians during the Council and agreed with their basic principles; though, perhaps because of the experience of *Humanae Vitae* and the enthusiastic acceptance by the bishops of what he considered a flawed liturgy, he ceased to believe in the present practicality of a general decentralization of the Church. However, in all else, he has remained a *ressourcement* theologian, even though he adopted these principles, not from the French theologians, but together with Cardinal Frings, whose secretary he was. He writes of Cardinal Frings:

Frings opposed the emphasis on magisterial sources from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He expected the perspective of an ecumenical council to be directed toward Scripture itself and the whole of Tradition, including especially the Greek Fathers. Here too we see at work his desire for Catholicity without shortcuts. One might even identify this desire as the distinctive theme characterizing all his influence on the Council. We shall return again and again to this question of catholicity, in which his life's experience as a bishop is summed up. Here he did not speak in favour of one trend or tendency, but as a pastor, as one speaking with the actual voice he had used in lifelong service in the Church. He in fact shunned that positivism based on the magisterium on the most recent manifestations of which Louis Bouyer has recently made some informative remarks. In connection with the debates with Charles Curran, Bouyer uncovers an absurd positivism in that apparently progressive mentality only to adhere to that in the Church which is defined as infallible.

Thus Cardinal Frings and he advocated **catholicity without shortcuts**, opposing this catholicity to any attempt to dilute its content whether by "conservatives" who concentrate on statements of the magisterium of the Council of Trent and from 1870 onwards to decide what is authentically Catholic, or the progressives who wish to limit Catholic teaching to what had been defined infallibly. Everything must be interpreted in the light of the whole Catholic Tradition, with special authority of the Church Fathers. It is to Tradition as a whole that our principal loyalty is due, not just a part of it - this is the *ressourcement* position. It led to our adopting a number of eucharistic prayers, something he didn't envisage, but is quite

logical in the circumstances.

As he could not accept de-centralisation, he became a Pope, who used Vatican I methods to bring about Vatican II decisions. This involved, on his part, intense listening to everybody - of all people, he will be remembered as a humble listener - before he decided on his own authority.

In this, Pope Francis is not very different, even as he moves to decentralize the Church. Personally, I believe they are two steps in the right direction - but that will need another article.

3) As a ressourcement theologian, Pope Benedict sees the papacy as a guardian of Tradition, and not its master. This Tradition required renewal and change:

We are gradually becoming aware today of how meaningless it was, in fact, of how unworthy and dishonest it was, when the priest prayed before the Gospel that God might purify his heart and lips... so that he might worthily and in a becoming manner proclaim the Word of God, when he knew very well that he was about to murmur this Word of God softly to himself just as he had done with the prayer, without any thought of proclaiming it... The word has lost its meaning and had become an empty ritual, and what the liturgical reform has done here was simply to restore meaning and validity to the word and to the Church's worship which was enshrined in it.

Against those who claimed that there could be no deviation from the Missal of Pius Vth, he wrote:

“We must say to the ‘Tridentines’ that the Church’s liturgy is alive, like the Church herself, and is always involved in a process of maturing.... The Missal can no more be mummified than the Church herself”

Also:

But he also remarked that the “old liturgy” was flawed. In particular, he notes that “the celebration of the old liturgy had slipped too much into the domain of the individual and the private, and that the communion between priests and faithful was insufficient” -- that people privately recited prayers from their prayer books during most of the Mass. He suggests that these factors probably accounted for the indifference of most Catholics when the old liturgical books disappeared: “People had never been in contact with the liturgy itself”

Nevertheless, the Church's post-Vatican II liturgy does need to reform, even though the "new liturgy" has been received by the Catholic episcopate and has been handed down, in continuity with what has been handed down since the Apostles.

The first change to be changed was "Mass facing the people." But there are examples in Tradition of the celebrant facing across the altar, notable in St Peter's itself! This is what Pope Benedict said in "The Spirit of the Liturgy":

The ordering of St. Peter's was then copied, so it would seem, in many other stational churches in Rome. For the purposes of this discussion, we do not need to go into the disputed details of this process. The controversy in our own century was triggered by another innovation. Because of topographical circumstances, it turned out that St. Peter's faced west. Thus, if the celebrating priest wanted – as the Christian tradition of prayer demands – to face east, he had to stand behind the people and look – this is the logical conclusion – towards the people. For whatever reason it was

done, one can also see this arrangement in a whole series of church buildings within St. Peter's direct sphere of influence.

The liturgical renewal in our own century took up this alleged model and developed from it a new idea for the form of the liturgy. The Eucharist – so it was said – had to be celebrated versus populum (towards the people). The altar – as can be seen in the normative model of St. Peter's – had to be positioned in such a way that priest and people looked at each other and formed together the circle of the celebrating community. This alone – so it was said – was compatible with the meaning of the Christian liturgy, with the requirement of active participation. This alone conformed to the primordial model of the Last Supper.

It must be said that this explanation is only true if facing east is as important to Catholic Tradition as those who oppose the change say it is - it is a reading back into history of our own liturgical concerns. Pere Bouyer suggested that both priest and people prayed looking East, so that priest and altar were behind the community in a church like St Peter's that faced West, anything but the modern arrangement!! But there is absolutely no evidence for this: it is an invention of Pere Bouyer, mortally disappointed that togetherness had replaced sanctity in the ceremonial. Pope Benedict chose a better solution, one that, in fact, solves the problem and allows both practices, facing the altar and facing the people. Tradition dictates that all face East; but, because some churches faced West, then the altar became liturgical East, was counted as East within the drama of the liturgy. It follows that whatever way the priest is facing, both priest and people are facing the altar. Even when the priest is looking towards the people, the true focal point is not the people, but the altar. In fact, what the hermeneutic of continuity dictates is what those who originally suggested the change wanted, long before the modernizers came on the scene, that everything be centred on the altar.

However, he would say that authentic liturgy does not exist in the mind of liturgists, but in the celebrations of the Church. It takes concrete celebration to discern what is needed, and we are now in a time of adaptation, of what he called "liturgical growth." He wrote:

“We might say that ...[before] the liturgy was rather like a fresco [in the early 20th century]. It had been preserved from damage, but it had been almost completely overlaid with whitewash by later generations. In the Missal from which the priest celebrated, the form of the liturgy that had grown from its earliest beginnings was still present, but, as far as the faithful were concerned, it was largely concealed beneath instructions for and forms of private prayer. The fresco was laid bare by the Liturgical Movement and, in a definitive way, by the Second Vatican Council. For a moment its colors and figures fascinated us. But since then the fresco has been endangered by climatic conditions as well as by various restorations and reconstructions. In fact, it is threatened with destruction, if the necessary steps are not taken to stop these damaging influences. Of course, there must be no question of its being covered with whitewash again, but what is imperative is a new reverence in the way we treat it, a new understanding of its message and its reality, so that rediscovery does not become the first stage of irreparable loss.”

As a cardinal, he called for changes in the way the liturgy was going. He wrote:

“It must be clearly stated that a real reform of the Church presupposes an unequivocal turning away from the erroneous paths whose catastrophic consequences are already incontestable”. But he also stressed (ten years later, in the book-length interview with Vittorio Messori, published as *The Ratzinger Report*) that “Vatican II in its official promulgations, in its authentic documents, cannot be held responsible for this development which, on the contrary, radically contradicts both the letter and

the spirit of the Council Fathers”; further, he said, “I am convinced that the damage that we have incurred in these twenty years is due, not to the ‘true’ Council, but to the unleashing within the Church of latent polemical and centrifugal forces; and outside the Church it is due to the confrontation with a cultural revolution in the West ... with its liberal-radical ideology of individualistic, rationalistic and hedonistic stamp”

He was calling for the return of the "sacred", the loss of which was a main reason, he believed, for the apostasy of western Europe. However, he was not calling for a return to the situation before the Council, in favour of the "old Mass" as it used to be, nor was he against the Missal of Paul VI.

Concerning the “so-called Tridentine liturgy”, he writes, there is “no such thing. The Council of Trent did not ‘make’ a liturgy”, he points out. The 1570 Missal is a revised version of the Roman Missal of about 100 years earlier, and differed only in tiny details. Pope Pius V promoted the exclusive use of the Missal to “help get rid of the uncertainties which had arisen in the confusion of liturgical movements in the Reformation period”, Cardinal Ratzinger writes, noting that an exception was made at that time for liturgies that were 200 or more years old, which were permitted to co-exist with the “new” revised Missal.

“We must say to the ‘Tridentines’ that the Church’s liturgy is alive, like the Church herself, and is always involved in a process of maturing.... The Missal can no more be mummified than the Church herself”, he writes.

However, Pope Benedict is the pope who has allowed the "old Mass", some would say, the "mummified Mass", to be celebrated at will, and he urged bishops to provide opportunities for those who want the old Mass to be able to attend. Although he denied any basic difference between the new and the old, he knew that, for many, they are distinct liturgical experiences. This act of his is a very good example of a *ressourcement* theologian with full Vatican I papal authority. To do this successfully, without doing violence to his theology, he had to be a humble listener, because in eucharistic ecclesiology the local eucharistic assembly is the source of Tradition, and it is the function of the Pope to guard and protect Tradition: neither he nor the bishops are masters of Tradition that springs from the synergy between the Holy Spirit and the Church. Hence, although he sees the need for reform, he has retained reverence for the old Mass. If it is a tradition that is still alive, he would be failing in his duty to simply forbid it. Of course, accepting that Tradition is fed by eucharistic assemblies all over the world, in a plethora of rites and styles, does argue for a radical de-centralisation; but Pope Benedict felt unable to do that. Instead, he humbly listened and then acted on his own authority in response to what he heard.

act

The who first suggested the idea that the altar is "liturgical East" said that the attention of priest and people was not originally on the altar but on the figure of Christ Pantokrator in the apse: they were looking up at heaven. Pope Benedict suggested that it would be too disturbing for the people to turn the altar round to its traditional position again; but that a crucifix be placed at the centre of the altar to be the centre of attention for the priest.

Personally, I have always concentrated on the altar's surface and heavenwards, and I only look at the people when I am addressing them. Looking at the people when I am praying to God has always struck me as silly and distracting.

So, What went wrong? Basically, the loss of the sacred. Not always, not everywhere, but in a sufficient number of cases to cause concern.. In fact, things went a bit wild, with lots of liturgical experimentation,

liturgical abuses etc.

Before the changes, liturgy was not a favourite course in seminaries: too much interest in lace and funny hats led to comment. Getting down to the nitty gritty with casuist Moral Theology was useful; concentrating on liturgy looked too much like self-indulgence. Hence, your average priest knew little and cared less about liturgy: they just followed the rubrics, while nuns said their rosaries. Then, all of a sudden, everybody became an expert, and much of the experimentation was in pure ignorance, and some was a crime calling to heaven for vengeance!!



Let us remember what Pere Bouyer said about the reform:

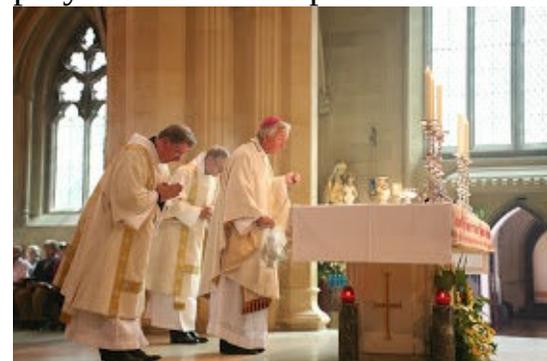
These prefaces have brought back into use, with at times some modifications and adaptations, everything that is most substantial in the treasury of the old sacramentaries. And possibly the new compositions that have been added will not appear unworthy beside their ancient neighbours.....If we add to this necessary reform the new (or ancient!) Communicantes and Hanc Igiturs which will re-establish in the Roman canon, along with the fulness of the commemoration of the magnalia Dei, a newly diversified expression of the Church presenting to the Father the unique sacrifice of the eternal Son, there is reason to hope that we shall again grasp all of the imperishable beauty of the jewel of the eucharistic tradition of the West that is the Roman Canon. Moreover, alongside this restoration of the Roman canon, we must rejoice in the intention to enrich the modern Latin liturgy with complementary examples from the riches of Catholic Tradition. At the same time, the goal has been to revive among the faithful the plenary sense of the eucharist, by proposing to them formularies that are as explicit and as directly accessible as possible in their structure and their language.

On the three new anaphoras he wrote:

The most radical, and at first sight most unusual novelty of the new texts is that they follow up to a certain point the remodelling of the most ancient eucharistic schemes worked out by the West Syrian liturgy, while retaining the ancient and more primitive distinction between the two epicleses as in both the Egyptian and Roman traditions. This is a point which may possibly be not merely of pedagogical interest, in order to permit Christians familiar with this latter tradition to come to know the complementary riches of the Eastern tradition.

I think it is fairly obvious that it is necessary to back up the new liturgy with a new catechesis, both for the priests and religious, and for the people. In fact, a liturgical reform needs a catechetical reform to immerse people in the new vocabulary, spirituality and the ideas behind the new liturgy. Unfortunately, after the Council, old ways of teaching were given up, without any clear idea of what would replace them, and whole generations of kids who went through Catholic schooling received a very muddled formation. Without a proper liturgical formation themselves, the teachers couldn't really acquaint their pupils with what they needed to know to appreciate what had been given them. Really, one of the chief functions of catechesis is to prepare people to take part in the liturgy of the Church. Until this is done, then just

listening and taking part will not unlock the treasures of the Roman Canon or any of the other eucharistic prayers. Part of the problem was lack of preparation.



We live at a time of "liturgical growth", to use Pope Benedict's words, where the post-Vatican II form of the Liturgy is becoming more and more part of the life of the Church; and, thanks to the Catholic faith of those who participate, the influence of Pope Benedict, and much good example from those who celebrate the now not so new Mass with reverence and dignity, and thanks to new music and much deep piety, the Mass is becoming more and more like it was intended to be. You only have to look at the photo that introduces this article to see that the Mass is as beautiful as any that were celebrated before the changes, with the added advantage that we all know and understand and participate.

Of course, there are the fanatics among the bloggers who show hatred for the ordinary version and make comparisons between quite eccentric celebrations of the normal Mass and beautiful celebrations of the old Mass, but never between beautiful celebrations of the new Mass and beautiful celebrations of the old.

Fairness in presentation of their point of view is not one of their strong points.

Back in the seventies, I taught VIth Form Divinity, and a very bright group argued in favour of the old Mass, which they had never actually seen. God sent us, as a monastic guest, an old Irish Franciscan priest. The combination of "old", "Irish" and "Franciscan" was too good to miss. I asked him if he would be willing to celebrate the old Mass for a group of boys. He was willing, and so they attended it.

I met the boys afterwards. "Priests didn't really celebrate Mass like that did they, Father!" exclaimed one boy, "He gabbled through the Latin!" "He rushed through it!" I said, "You compare a modern parish Mass with one sung in Latin by monks of Solesmes, and of course the monks of Solesmes win. Now you can compare your normal parish Mass with what you have attended today: it is more realistic!"

(

This contribution is available at <http://fatherdavidbirdosb.blogspot.com/2015/02/traditional-liturgy-in-its-post-vatican.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Healthy Habits for the New Year Should Include Natural Family Planning [at Plot Line and Sinker]

The beginning of a new year often prompts the making of resolutions regarding lifestyle. Some will decide to exercise more or to eat better, quit smoking, eat less sugar etc.

Nowadays healthier lifestyle choices are encouraged: a diet rich in whole foods, fresh fruits and vegetables, low in saturated fat. Unhealthy habits are discouraged: poor diet, inactivity, smoking, excessive drinking.

An important part of a healthy lifestyle also includes making **good choices regarding birth regulation.**

Moral considerations aside, **Natural Family Planning, or NFP, is very healthy.** It is a highly effective method of birth regulation, and it also poses no physical side effects. In my experience, NFP fosters a greater understanding and appreciation of the couple's natural combined gift of fertility. There are no pills or chemicals to harm a woman's delicate system. There are no devices or operations for either man or woman.

Other methods, however, are not so health-inducing.

Each prescription for chemical contraception (Pill, patch, vaginal ring, injectables) includes an extensive insert **outlining the many physical side effects:** an increased risk of weight gain, mood swings, headaches, breast cancer, blood clots, strokes. Vasectomy comes with an increased risk of prostate cancer and dementia. Women who undergo a tubal ligation have a greater risk of chronic pain and hysterectomy.

For those who are especially concerned with the health of the environment, **chemical contraception is a likely culprit in contributing to the feminization of male fish.** Although chemical contraception isn't the only cause, the following link includes more detail on chemical contraception's effect on fish:

<http://pubs.acs.org/cen/coverstory/86/8608cover.html>

A new year can be an opportune time to adopt healthier lifestyle choices. It's also a great time to learn NFP.

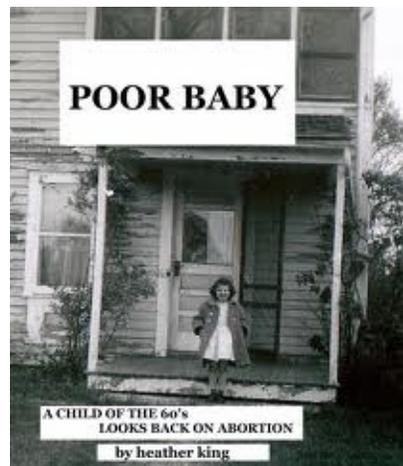
My husband, James, and I are certified NFP teachers and we even teach NFP online. **For more information on NFP**, check out a previous column entitled, [“Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About NFP, But Were Afraid to Ask”](#).

Text Copyright 2015 Ellen Gable Hrkach

[Photo purchased on iStock](#)

On A Failure of Love: "Poor Baby: A Child of the Sixties Looks Back On Abortion" [at Rambling Follower]

As thousand march on Washington to protect human life in all its vulnerability, I wanted to share this piece from my archives. First published in March 2013....



Last night - Good Friday - felt like the right time to download on my brand new Kindle a book - really more like a 50-plus page essay, by L.A.-based writer

[Heather King](#)

called

["Poor Baby,"](#)

a raw meditation on her three abortions.

No matter one's personal history, or one's political views on whether abortion should be legal, or one's moral belief as to whether abortion ever can be an ethical choice, this book is worth reading. In fact, I would say anyone with strong views about abortion should read this book with clear eyes and an open heart. We need King's voice in the conversation.

So much of the profoundly polarizing abortion "debate" in this country lacks nuance; this book does not.

"Even women, who will talk about anything, don't talk about abortion. Women, who within five minutes of being introduced will know each others' career and relationship status, family situation, taste in clothing, food, movies, books, and men, don't talk about abortion. I think this is because women, of all people, know that abortion is a failure of love. "

King, who converted to the Catholic faith long after she terminated three pregnancies by three different men, has come to believe, as I do, that abortion is not an ethical act. But this book not a polemic. It is personal history written from a place of deep suffering lived out in the presence of overwhelming love.

In a sense, I could not relate to King's story. All four times in my life that I have been pregnant, I have

wanted to be, and considered the fact that I was, miraculous. That is because during my childbearing years, I struggled with infertility, so much so that when Greg and I were talking about getting married, I let him know it was probable I could never have a child conceived in my womb and asked him: would he be open to adopting children? (Of course he was.)



King's meditation is raw and my only quibble with this book is that it feels as if she took a big breath and just started talking and never stopped. I would have liked some chapters, or some breaks in the text so I could breath a bit to better take in all her intensity, and honesty.

Here is an example of how powerful the work is. Before telling her own story, King takes equal aim at both sides of the abortion debate and meditates on what is truly at stake. She questions, for example, why abortion opponents always choose a blond-haired child as the one who was saved from abortion. In classic Heather King style, she takes that observation and makes a still bigger point.

Why not choose as your pro-life poster child a 20-year-old with Down syndrome, or a flaming drag queen, or an abscessed meth freak? Why not acknowledge that a good percentage of the babies who are "saved" are going to become broken-down homeless people, illegal immigrants, and vicious criminals? That of course is no reason to promote abortion; in fact, that's the very reason abortion is wrong. Let's remember who we're dealing with here, folks: the unfathomable human race. We're all bothersome. We're all, in our ways, broken. Which somehow makes it all the more imperative that we not lose a single one.

King's book reads as incantation, as a sometimes angry, always honest, prayer, a pouring out of what it means to be human, to have suffered, to have lost and to be found. We need her witness.

This contribution is available at <http://ramblingfollower.blogspot.com/2015/01/on-failure-of-love-poor-baby-child-of.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Let's Start at the Very Beginning [at bukas palad]



Year B / Ordinary Time / Week 2 / Sunday

Readings: 1 Samuel 3.3b-10, 19 / Responsorial Psalm 40.2-4, 7-8, 8-9, 10 (R/v 8a and 9a) / I Corinthians 6.13c-15a, 17-20 / John 2.35-42

Do you remember that moment when a classmate or office worker became your friend? Or when it dawned on you that you found your life's partner?

Perhaps, it was the moment you saw her care for your parents. Or, it was when you felt safe in his presence on the rollercoaster. Or, it was when the both of you saw yourselves sitting on a swing and growing old together.

These are defining moments between friends. They tell us when our interactions become friendships for life. More importantly, they teach us that true friends don't ask us to be anyone else but ourselves. They accept and love us as we are. Such friendships allow us to live freely without pretense or the anxiety of never being good enough. Value these moments, we must.

And celebrate them, we should as people of faith. They are manifestations of God's goodness. Through them, our friends show us how God wants to enliven and enrich our lives and faith, not because we deserve friendships but because God wants to be in friendship with us through them. The right and just response is joyful gratitude; this is the most human act we can do for friends.

Even if friendships challenge us, it is because God graces us with friends to nurture and authenticate our friendship with God. These more difficult moments are how God purifies, refines and deepens our friendship with God through the ordinariness of human friendships.

I'd like to believe that each of us has had similar experiences with Jesus in whom we meet God. Human as we are I think we often forget these moments of encountering Jesus. Our daily struggles and distractions in school, at work and in our family lives and friendships often divert our gaze from Jesus.

But let's recall these moments: haven't they been life changing? Life changing as Jesus transforms the ordinariness of our interactions with God into the extraordinariness of God's friendship with us? You might have had such a moment in prayer or at a retreat, in Mass or when you served the poor. It might have happened at a difficult time of pain and suffering or in a time of grace and joy. It might even have been in an everyday moment like sitting among friends at the hawkers' centre or lullabying a newborn to sleep.

Why should we pay attention to these moments with Jesus as we begin a new year? What good is it to remember them when the world demands that we focus more on the future?

In *The Sound of Music*, Maria teaches the children to sing by starting at the very beginning, a very good place to start, with the Do-Re-Mis. If we seriously want to live our Christian lives better, Maria's advice is worth heeding because I believe the quality of our Christian life depends on how well we anchor it in that definitive moment when our friendship with Jesus first began.

Our gospel story on these first of many Sundays this year is about the beginning of Jesus' friendship Andrew and the other disciple. It begins with questions to get to know one another and it ends with an

invitation to come home.

'Where do you live?' they asked. Jesus replied, 'Come and see'; so that they went and saw where he lived, and stayed with him that day. It was about the tenth hour.

Jesus invited both men to that most intimate of places we call home. Here, they stayed with him. Here, they came to know who he is. Here is where they lived with him.

To live with someone is to share one's life. It is also to interact with another's inner thoughts and feelings. And to allow someone to enter our living space is to permit her to share herself, as we have shared ourselves. This mutual sharing with one another of all that is good and all not so good is the very foundation for something beautiful and fruitful to come into being. What this is is genuine friendship. And the everydayness of life is where we experience genuine friendship.

I'd like to think John the Evangelist must have been so deeply impressed with this encounter the disciples had with Jesus and beginning a friendship that it imprinted itself on his memory. Almost 80 years later when John wrote his Gospel, he found it important enough to remember this tenth hour, which is 4 o'clock in the afternoon. It is remarkably noteworthy that John records this hour because much of the gospels do not tell us the dates and times when Jesus encountered people.

John's description of this 4 o'clock encounter the disciples had with Jesus should challenge us: "Can we remember that significant moment when we encountered Jesus? When was it?"

Perhaps, as we remember this moment we will see again how Jesus invited us into genuine friendship, even before we reached out to him. More importantly, our remembering will help us see more clearly how this definitive moment, this 4 o'clock hour, offers us the reason to live our Christian life well this year: this is the moment when Jesus assured us that his friendship is ours for all times and in all situations.

This morning the Church, through the readings, invites you and me to remember how Jesus' friendship is ours to save us. Jesus saves us by teaching us to listen to God's instruction on how to live the good Christian life. This is the lesson Samuel learns in our first reading: to listen to God's voice. This is why Eli asks Samuel to say, "Speak, God, your servant is listening." We would be wise to make this humble disposition our daily practice to live the good Christian life better. Then, it is good for God to hear us say, like the psalmist today, "Here am I, Lord, I come to do your will."

Yes, if we want to seriously live our Christian faith well in the coming month days, it does matter that we remember the definitive moment when you and I met Jesus. For then was when our world was turned

upside down because God befriended us in Jesus, and nothing ever was the same again.

So, when my friends was your 4 o'clock hour with Jesus?

Preached at St Ignatius Church, Singapore.

photo: engagement time at central park, new york city by adsj (Feb2014)

This contribution is available at <http://bukas-palad.blogspot.sg/2015/01/homily-lets-start-at-very-beginning.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Breeding Like Rabbits - NOT the Catholic Way [at Quiet Consecration]

Yesterday the mainstream press once again trumpeted a headline about Pope Francis. In what can only be described as gleeful and surprised tones, the main captions above pictures of the Holy Father speaking to the press midflight read "Pope says Catholics should not Breed like Rabbits".

Immediately, many people who do not understand Catholic theology (and have no intention of *ever*

understanding Catholic theology and teaching) flipped out. Depending upon their political stance, their reactions varied between "This guy isn't even Catholic any more" and "I bet this means Catholics will get to use the Pill without going to confession". Some of the more bizarre members of either side of the spectrum decided this means we can have Women Priests.

The Catholic Church teaches:

2370

Periodic continence, that is, the methods of birth regulation based on self-observation and the use of infertile periods, is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality. These methods respect the bodies of the spouses, encourage tenderness between them, and favor the education of an authentic freedom. In contrast, "every action which, whether in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible" is intrinsically evil:

Thus the innate language that expresses the total reciprocal self-giving of husband and wife is overlaid, through contraception, by an objectively contradictory language, namely, that of not giving oneself totally to the other. This leads not only to a positive refusal to be open to life but also to a falsification of the inner truth of conjugal love, which is called upon to give itself in personal totality. . . . The difference, both anthropological and moral, between contraception and recourse to the rhythm of the cycle . . . involves in the final analysis two irreconcilable concepts of the human person and of human sexuality.

Anyone who takes the time to read this section of the Catechism is going to focus on the word 'rhythm' and start laughing. O those crazy Catholics - still using the 'rhythm method'. Others are going to wonder how avoiding having sexual relations with one's spouse during peak times of probably fertilization is any different than artificial contraception - after all, aren't you doing that for the same reason? To avoid children? Why is one ok and the other a sin?

Both attitudes fail to notice the essence of the teaching; that being the idea of total self-giving that should define a marriage. Too long have we labored under the impression that marriage is a 50/50 proposition. This idea has led to divorce. Bringing two people together and telling them to meet each other halfway means that each one gets to decide where that halfway mark is and whether or not they have met it to their

own satisfaction.

Telling a man and a woman that marriage is 100/100 percent, each spouse required to give themselves totally and completely to the other, is not in accordance with today's mindset. Being willing to sacrifice, to nurture, to give until one is totally spent is considered old fashioned, unhealthy, and a way towards domination of one person over the other.

To be fair, there is a reason for this: rarely has this notion of total self giving and sacrifice made itself into the mainstream in a fair and reasonable manner. What has happened, over and over again, is that the physically weaker of the species has given of itself to its detriment. Those of the physically stronger sex - usually male - who have given totally of themselves to their mate have been derided as weak - I believe the term used has been 'pussy whipped' - and so made to feel as though the only way they can really show how wonderful they are is to impose their will on the other person 'for their own good'.

The translation into the secular legal system was not kind to females. People forget. We were not allowed to have our own bank accounts, our own lines of credit, given a seat in the classroom of higher learning in places like Harvard or Yale because we might take a spot from a man who would need it to support a family. Women were not appreciated for their talent or their intelligence except in rare cases.

While we may today sing out loud that the woman is the heart and soul of the home, often times that translated into never being able to leave the home. My experience is becoming that many of our younger, male Catholic writers have failed to acknowledge this and spend far too much time lamenting and wishing for the 'good ol' days'. Most of the time they forget - some of those days were far from good, if you were a woman who had been dumped at the side of the road for a younger model or beaten into submission, or essentially sold into slavery by parents who wanted you to have a 'good marriage'.

All this is acknowledged and understood. I do not believe the feminist movement of the 1950's,60's or 70's came into being in a vacuum. I am not so naïve.

What I like to point out in this teaching, however, is the overlooked word "respect".

Catholic Teaching on procreation, sexuality, and the body focuses one on respect for the natural functions of the body. It urges one to learn about how the body works, to understand the marvelous mechanism that was given to us by our Creator, and to respect its right to function without artificial restraint. Instead of making a woman ingest chemicals that expose her to harm in order to avoid conceiving a child, it asks a man to respect her right to not have sexual relations with him during her fertile time. Instead of asking a man to surgically mutilate himself, we as women are asked to include him in our decision making, to teach him about how we function and to respect

him

by loving him enough to fully incorporate his needs and wants into our lives. The man is asked to love us as Christ loves the Church - and for those who care to think about this, Christ gave up His Life for The Church.

Today I look back on my life and see so many places where I went wrong. I do not regret the past, but I wish sometimes I had taken the time to learn what The Church teaches about love, marriage and sexuality. I wish I had not limited myself and my freedom by trying so hard to live the way the world told me a

young, liberated woman should live.

I wish I had not believed the lies.

The Holy Father is right. Catholics are not asked to breed like rabbits.

We are asked to be fruitful and multiply.

There is a big, big difference.

This contribution is available at <http://quietconsecration.blogspot.com/2015/01/breeding-like-rabbits-not-catholic-way.html>

Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Surprisingly So [at Blogging For A Better Life]

At first I was a bit more disappointed than surprised as I tried to follow exactly what this typed note on a card read to do.

The card reads,

“The way to happiness: keep your heart free from hate, your mind from worry. Live simply, expect little, give much. Fill your life with love. Scatter sunshine. Forget self, think of others. Do as you would be done by. Try this for a week and you will be surprised.”

To be perfectly honest, I tried to focus on doing this for about an hour and did not exceed. Next attempt I tried for fifteen minutes and still failed, miserably.

I found that only one minute at a time is conceivable for me.

A little disappointing, but I won't give up, telling myself one minute can become two minutes and then five minutes, and so forth.

I do have to say though, the one minute that I was able to accomplish this was one of the MOST gratifying moments my soul has experienced in a long time.

It sounds so easy, but it's really not when you try to swallow the written words.

Keep your heart free from hate

, that would require loving all mankind, even those poor souls we don't care to give the time of day to, let alone love deeply.

Keep your mind from worry

, letting go of the “what ifs” in life is really, really hard, especially if you’re a mom whose main job has always been to worry and fret over everything possible and impossible.

Live simply

, simply quit wanting more and more.

Expect little

, learn to be content with what you have and have not.

Give much

, no more giving just the leftovers or extras you have in life.

Fill your life with love

, which brings us back to keeping our hearts free from hate, loving even those we consider unlovable.

Scatter sunshine

, be warm and bright and joyful.

Forget self, think of others

, this is a doozie and implores us to serve others.

Do as you would be done by

, invokes us to pray for the wisdom to change our not so pleasing ways.

Weeks are made up of days spent, days are piles of hours gone by; hours come from minutes depleted. Everyone can do anything for one minute.

Try this for a week and you will be surprised

Surprisingly so, it really is the way to happiness!



This contribution is available at <http://blogforabetterlife.blogspot.com/2015/01/surprisingly-so.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Some thoughts on marriage and culture which need more editing [at Bethune Catholic]

An avid hiker and adventurer decides to hike the 2,200 mile Appalachian Trail from Springer Mountain, GA to Mount Katahdin, ME. This is not a journey for the faint of heart. There are many days of fatigue, sore muscles, blisters, rain, and cold. There are also moments and days of breathtaking beauty, accomplishment, excitement and ultimately triumph at the end of the trail. The excitement is sustained because of the goal and the commitment to the goal. This excitement is sustained through the fatigue and the rain and the cold. And note, the excitement comes not just at the triumph at the end, but also before and during the journey.

There are certain things you can't measure based on any given instant in time. Happiness (or excitement) in marriage is such a thing. Yet present culture only measures the instant, as in, instant gratification. (You can't compare marriage to a long hike, but the analogy has some merit.)

For example, I heard a promo for a radio show a few months ago which promised to discuss why the rate of infidelity in marriage increases the longer couples are together. The stated premise of the radio guest was that a marriage cannot sustain excitement as the marriage progresses in time.

Mostly what we read about infidelity concentrates on the means and opportunity. Unfortunately, the means and opportunities have become more frequent and advanced with technology and culture.

But regardless of the means and opportunity, this doesn't address the question of marriage. We can't sustain happiness or excitement in marriage if we don't understand what marriage is and what the purpose and ends of marriage are. Of course these things are exactly what our present culture is confused about and struggling with.

Pope Pius XI, in his encyclical **Casti Connubii** wrote about marriage: *Thus amongst the blessings of marriage, the child holds the first place. And: The second blessing of matrimony which We said was mentioned by St. Augustine, is the blessing of conjugal honor which consists in the mutual fidelity of the spouses in fulfilling the marriage contract, so that what belongs to one of the parties by reason of this contract sanctioned by divine law, may not be denied to him or permitted to any third person...*

The Church teaches marriage has a procreative and unitive purpose as described as blessings by Pope Pius XI above.

Our present culture believes that everything boils down to sex. And I guess if that were true (or held to be true), most marriages would be doomed. The fact is, that marriage has a unitive purpose which is not all about sex, and a procreative purpose, which is also not all about sex.

One of Dietrich Von Hildebrand's theses in his book on marriage (**Marriage - the mystery of Faithful Love** [Sophia Institute Press]) is that the primary end of marriage is procreation, but the primary meaning of is love. But what is love?

Love is an act of the will-desiring the good for the object of our love. It is obvious from this definition that love does not have a time period. For if one desires the good for another, does one desire this good

only for two years, or fifteen years? When you fall in love, do you put this time limit on how long you will love? Do our marriage vows have a time limit? What do the vows mean if they have a time limit? The answers to these questions, whether they concern love for a spouse, a child, or a friend demonstrate the willful aspect of love and the nonsense of the phrase “*I have fallen out of love.*”

Marital love has a special character in that it imitates God’s creative love. God’s love is so great He wants to share His life, so He creates Man. Man and woman love each other so much that they want to share their lives, so they procreate. But just as God’s love doesn’t end in the act of creating man, man and wife’s love can’t end in the marital act. God nurtures and cares for his creation. Man and wife must nurture and care for their creation. Caring for their creation involves both nurturing their offspring and, importantly, each other. Note that love again does not have limits and is not stingy, something to be kept between one or two people. By nature love shares and multiplies.

So what about this excitement! If the goal of the family is to journey together to Heaven, than the journey is one of both fatigue in daily tasks and tribulations, but also excitement at the daily fatigue and tribulations. The journey also has moments of intense beauty and enjoyment. There are always new challenges, some of them painful, but with perseverance for the goal, God helps us melt these challenges. Gold is purified by fire, the gold we seek with excitement

So what of the spouse seeks excitement elsewhere? He or she is doomed to failure because the excitement they really seek is not momentary-but that is all they get, a moment. Thus they will go on seeking, but never finding. Our hearts are truly restless until they rest in our Lord.

I end with words from *Humanae Vitae*:

Then, this love is total, that is to say, it is a very special form of personal friendship, in which husband and wife generously share everything, without undue reservations or selfish calculations. Whoever truly loves his marriage partner loves not only for what he receives, but for the partner's self, rejoicing that he can enrich his partner with the gift of himself.

Again, this love is faithful and exclusive until death. Thus in fact do bride and groom conceive it to be on the day when they freely and in full awareness assume the duty of the marriage bond. A fidelity, this, which can sometimes be difficult, but is always possible, always noble and meritorious, as no one can deny. The example of so many married persons down through the centuries shows, not only that fidelity is according to the nature of marriage, but also that it is a source of profound and lasting happiness.

This contribution is available at <http://www.bethunecatholic.blogspot.com/2015/01/some-thoughts-on-marriage-and-culture.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

The Ache of Longing [at A Still Small Voice]

Peace of Christ brothers and sisters! I hope I find you all well. :)

I attended the SEEK2015 Conference this past week and truly had a beautiful and fruitful time.

It was filled with a whole bunch of laughter, meeting new friends, reuniting with old ones, getting lost, *over priced food*

and a whole bunch of holy Wisdom and the love of the Most Holy Trinity.

However, I did not have an epiphany (ha) on this trip. I found myself at peace and constantly adoring Our Lord. I truly thank God for all of the people I was able to attend SEEK with and I thank Him for the new friends that I got to know in such a short amount of time.

Over the past few weeks I've neglected Jesus' love for me but this past week I became vulnerable and was literally swimming in His love by the means of the most sacred Sacraments of Mass and Reconciliation, His Mother and the people whom are His.

My heart is heavy though and my soul is longing.

On the way home I realized that my being wasn't satisfied,

not that I wasn't satisfied with the week or the talks or the experience,

because I didn't come with expectations. (I actually signed up not having strong desires to go, but the will of God spoke otherwise.) However, I realized that this dissatisfaction was within myself. I felt my heart longing, aching, literally.

I had no idea as to why or how this longing came about and I was greatly confused. I just had such a beautiful time at the conference, nothing went wrong (other than minor incidents), it was simply peaceful and humorous.

I kept on asking God “Why is my heart so heavy right now?” “What could I possibly desire more?” “What are you asking of me? There has to be something that you’re asking of me that you would give me these seemingly unattainable desires.” “Why I am not quenched?”

My girl, St. Faustina, stated that her desires are mad and unattainable and I was just having a real, deep bonding time with her because I was stating that to Jesus over and over and over again.

It is truly crazy how beautiful and “mad” the Lord is and the way He works.

You see, my beautiful best friend, Addie, has gone to be sanctified in the light of the Carmelite Convent so we aren’t able to see or talk to each other a lot, other than Come and See’s and letters for Christmas and Easter. Throughout our friendship, (which began in 8

th

grade) we grew together and we matured together spiritually. When I converted to the truth and beauty called the

Catholic Church

, we started recognizing that we both go through similar things (sufferings and struggles in most cases) at the same time. Jesus never failed. Either I would talk to Addie and she would exclaim how she was going through that too, or she would come to me and I would say that I was going through that, also.

As one would imagine, it has been extremely difficult but so extremely beautiful that Addie has been called to such a beautiful way of sanctity.

Without fail, the Lord continues to mold Addie and my own heart together, even through physical separation.

I’m convicted of this for multiple reasons.

Addie sent me a letter for Christmas and in this letter was a present for me on my birthday that I wasn't allowed to open until January 6 - my birthday (which is today, that's why I made the epiphany pun.)

As I awoke from my deep sleep, which was very much needed, I opened it and wept.

In this gift, was a poem titled "Sweet Soul That Wanted More." Boom. Jesus.

If you don't mind, I would like to share this gift to you so that you can make it your gift, also.

"How lovely is Your dwelling-place, O Lord,

In that Sacred Wine and Bread.

My soul always knew it longed for more

Than what it had instead.

And now, how I always long to adore

That sacred side that bled;

Those beautiful Hands, those Precious Feet,

Your Loving Heart, Your wounded Head.

And how I always long to receive You -

As You run to meet my soul

From golden chalice, golden plate.

How unworthy they are to hold You,

These golden, earthly things.

Still how unworthy is my soul

To behold my Great and Gentle King!

O Lord! I love Thee, how I love Thee

Even to gaze on You in the monstrance.

When my heart is worried worn. . .

I know Your love is always constant!

My God, You've captured me,

You've captivated my little soul.

In Your sweet, loving glance, You made me see

That only You can make me whole.

I became like the woman at the well

To whom You said "I thirst."

I know that I too thirsted for You

And not those things I wanted first.

I became like the Magdalene,

Falling before You, to the floor,

You let me see nothing in those things I wanted then,

But it was You, always You,

That my soul wanted more."

How insane... y'all even the littlest things in there are miracles in itself. Not to take away that the whole poem was singing of my soul, of my longing -

thirsting

.

Later on, before I opened my gift, I was searching for a picture of Mary, Mary Magdalene and John at the foot of the Cross for interior purposes to contemplate and of course, there it appears.

Now, after all of this and lunch with mom I desired to go pray in the local perpetual Adoration Chapel. However, I knew that I couldn't hold back my tears when I would see Him so I decided that I wanted to pray in the Church instead. If you don't already know this, our local Church is ALWAYS locked -

ALWAYS

. (Exception of Mass.)

I was walking up to the doors of the Church and I was repeating "Jesus, please open the door, open the door, open the door." Just to open the doors to that beautiful sanctuary. I started laughing as I genuflected, because ultimately, Jesus is funny.

There, on the altar, before Jesus in the tabernacle I wept and sounded like a broken something or another that makes noises.

I wept because I was confused, I wept because I was unsure of what God was asking of me, I wept because I knew something more was coming and I was scared.

Before Jesus, I began writing my prayers (like I sometimes do), which I will provide at the end. They are extremely lengthy (I'm a yapper.)

While I concluded my date with Jesus and His Mother, I was walking out and I looked up, just to see a stained glass window of Mary, John and Mary Magdalene at the Feet of my Jesus (the image in which I was looking for later on that day.)



How Jesus wants to fulfill the desires of my heart, even the littlest ones, even the mad and seemingly unattainable ones.

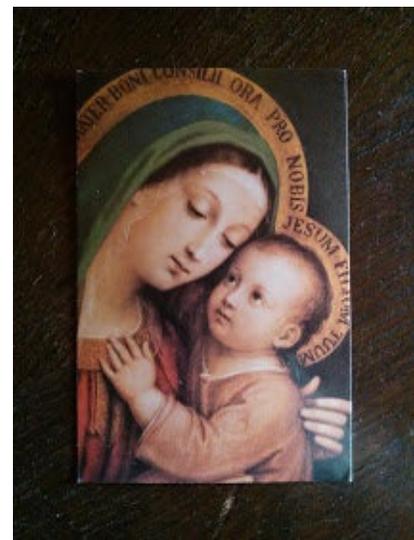
I reveal a lot of what my being is crying in my prayer, but I would like to conclude that Jesus doesn't place some of these desires in a heart to leave it lost, to leave it thirsty. He desires to quench, to satisfy. He is the ultimate satisfaction, He is the living Water.

In this time of this uncertain longing, I ask that you would pray for me, that I would respond with love, humility and courage so that when Jesus reveals what I'm longing for I may say 'yes.'

God bless you and Mary protect you.

"And they all ate and were satisfied."

Matthew 15:37



Here, my friends, is my prayer during this ache of my longing. It's real.

My Beloved Jesus,

How I love You.

I adore You.

How much my whole being aches for You.

This longing, O Lord, is for something more.

I'm heart-broken, I'm hurting, I'm longing, I'm searching, I'm asking, I'm weeping, I'm suffering.

I desire You. I desire You. All of You. I desire heaven and I wish to love You for all eternity.

This longing, O my sweet Jesus, is hurting me, it's confusing me. What do You seek? What do you desire of this lowly daughter that she is never satisfied?

All I want is You. All I want is You. All I want is You.

Let not my heart stray, O Lord, let me always cling to You. Never let go of me. Keep me in captivation of Your glory, of Your mercy, of Your love. O Lord, I lack so much - so much and this I know. But what is this longing You have placed inside of me? I have come to think, O Lord, that You are preparing me for something greater, but first I must go throughout an abundance of suffering, through purgation, through pain in order to fully and fruitfully love Thee. And this longing, O Lord, that seems mad and unquenchable is Your way of strength for me.

My persistence, O Lord is great, which You know, and I believe that the persistence inside of me is You. Be my perseverance in this time of longing, while I wait for whatever You reveal to me.

Hold me, O Lord, in this time and make this longing, these mad desires, stronger until I come to do what You will of me in perfect humility, joy and love.

My soul, O Lord, is dark.

My body, weeping.

My heart, fragile.

My mind, loud.

My Jesus, my God, my Desire. Look upon me with Your most tender and merciful gaze and radiate

Your truth within me, bring me out of my misery, I give You permission to continuously shed light on my soul, so that I may come to know myself interiorly, come to recognize all of my failings. All of the ways I do not love and cure me of myself. Shine so brightly so that I may truly see. See who You are, purely. I want to see You in all truth, in all beauty.

As for my weeping body, O Lord, it is Yours. Do what You will of me. Give me the courage, the humility, to do and to love.

My heart, O Lord, I bind to Yours. Let the continuous beat of the life within me give all glory and praise to You at every moment.

My mind, O Lord, seems to be my constant vice. Quiet my mind and keep it fixed on You. Conquer my thoughts and captivate my mind on all things pure and heavenly. Fixate my wandering thoughts to Thee.

I love You.

I am Yours.

Entire Abandonment

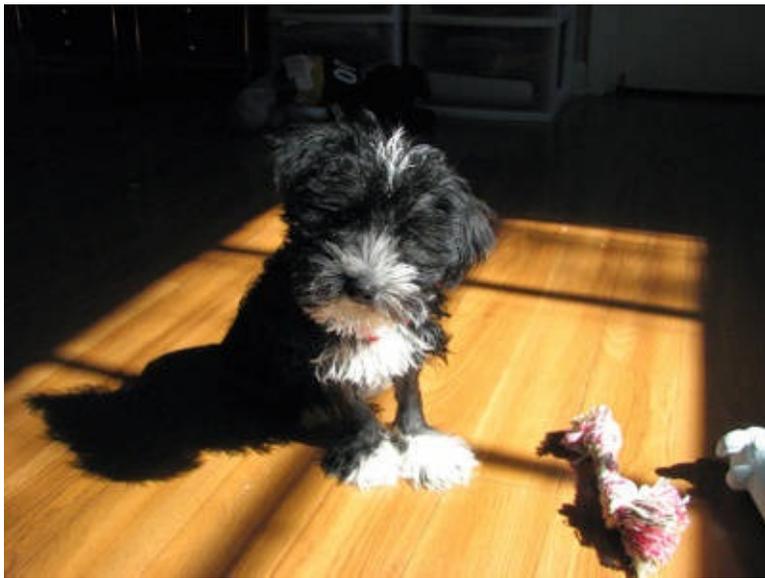
Zoë

This contribution is available at <http://zoejumonville.blogspot.com/2015/01/the-ache-of-longing.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Roller Coasters, Puppies, and Learning to Fly! [at beautiful thorns]

The past eleven days has been a real roller coaster ride! I am not a big fan of roller coasters, either at amusement parks or in real life! They make me nauseous and I'm not a fan of the thrill. Sometimes however the trials of life that feel like roller coaster rides can help us grow the most in faith. Hopefully the story I am about to tell will produce growth in me. After-all, the Lord can use anything (Romans 8:28)!



Our children have been begging us for a while for a puppy. My husband and I have been researching what would be a good breed for our family. We have tried big breed dogs and they usually knock the children over and can be pretty destructive so that did not work for our family. We once had a Miniature Schnauzer and she was a really good dog. She was smart, easy to house-break and good with the kids. Pure bred Schnauzers however are a lot more than we could afford. I ended up finding some mixed breed Schnauzer/ Havanese puppies that were available. They cost a lot less and were very cute. So, January 4th we surprised our children with this new puppy because for some reason Tom and I thrive off chaos ;) We had her for four days when suddenly she started vomiting, not just once but multiple times. I took her to the vet where they performed some tests on her and discovered she had Parvovirus. From everything I read online, Parvo was often times fatal in puppies. The prognosis looked pretty bleak!

Ironically right before all this happened, the Lord gave me a word for this year. He told me this year would be a year of learning to walk in Kingdom authority; the authority I have as a daughter of the King. Now, if you are like me, you know this stuff in your head but it hasn't necessarily reached your heart yet. That is the place I think I am at. The Lord also told me he wanted me to come up higher and take my rightful place among royalty. I then saw an origami fortune teller like we would often make in middle school and I saw an origami bird. He told me I could either choose to worry about the future or I could choose to become like a bird and fly.

I am thinking it can be a really powerful thing to truly know who we are in Christ and walk in the knowledge of the authority we have in him! We are God's children and we have full access to his Kingdom. In the story of the prodigal son, the father reminded the elder son that everything he had was available to him and at his disposal. This applies to us as well! If we could walk in the knowledge of that,

we could move mountains!



Often times however, we choose to get caught up in worldly affairs and worry. If you are like me, you worry about the here and now and what the future holds. By doing this, we rob ourselves of our inheritance.

The younger son understood that he could have full access to his inheritance in the present. What he did not understand is that he was made for greatness. If he had chosen to stay in his Father's house, he would have been able to walk in that greatness. Instead he chose what the world was offering him and lost his dignity until he repented and came back to the father.

One thing I have learned through the late John Wimber and his book "Power Healing" is we do not need to beg God for things. He is our loving Father and longs to pour out on us the richness of his mercy and grace. It is available for the asking. Once John begged the Lord for healing for a sick woman and the Lord gave John a vision of a huge honey-comb overflowing and dripping with honey. He showed John that he did not need to beg for healing. He was a loving Father, longing to pour out his goodness.

Now, I don't fully understand everything about the Kingdom. I don't understand why God would heal a puppy and not always people. Scripture says that God's ways are not our ways (Isaiah 55:8). There have been times in the past I have prayed for terminally ill people and even children. I was believing for healing for them as were their loved ones. The Holy Spirit led me to pray for them and when the burden to intercede lifted from my heart, I heard the Lord say, "It is finished!" and then they died. I believe they did receive their healing, just not in the way we wanted to see. They must have received their healing in the after-life and their suffering was worth something, it was redemptive.

So, back to our puppy. I figured if I could believe in healing for a puppy, I could believe more fully in healing for people who are made in the image and likeness of God. She ended up being my guinea pig to learn how to pray more perfectly for healing. I believed that God wanted to heal her. I tried to stand in faith of God's healing for her but my faith was tested greatly! As she was getting over the Parvovirus, she was developing a whole new set of symptoms not related to the Parvo. She was experiencing pain all over her body, especially in her hind legs. At first the vet thought she had a liver problem but then it was discovered that she had a bad case of hook worms that had migrated into her muscles. All week long it

was touch and go as to whether she would live or die. Meanwhile, we imagined our pocket book shrinking and the dog not even making it. The reason it felt like a roller coaster ride was because I let what the vet was telling me and the circumstances dictate whether I had faith or lack of peace and discouragement. This showed me that I still had a long way to go and a lot to learn. I believed I was supposed to pray for her healing but my faith for that was definitely tested. Amazingly she did live and she is home with us. She still has some pain, can't walk well and is weak but I am continuing to pray for her and believe in a full recovery. Oh, and on the financial end of things, the breeder gave me my money back for the puppy plus money for the vet. The vet bill didn't come to nearly as much as I thought it would and what the woman gave me almost paid for all of it.



I believe the Lord wants to get us to a place where our faith and trust in him is unwavering and not dependent on our circumstances. When the storms of life come he wants us to not be shaken. A couple years ago the Lord gave me a word that a great harvest was coming into the Church. I was also told that "Now is the time to get ready!". The Lord, through the storms of life is preparing people to be a light to others. He is preparing us to be able to stand even in the midst of adversity and give hope to those around us! He is calling us to help manifest his Kingdom here on earth!

This contribution is available at <http://www.beautifulthorns.com/2015/01/roller-coasters-puppies-and-learning-to.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Love: Free, Total, Faithful, Fruitful [at Adult Catechesis & Christian Religious Literacy in the Roman Catholic Tradition]





Jn 15:2,16

Love is not love if it is not, or lacks the opportunity, to be fruitful. I know of, at least, two couples, one Catholic, one not, who were expressly told by their physicians it was not possible for them to have children. And, voila!!! One dear friend I know laughed in her doctor's face when told she was pregnant. The miraculous, blessed humor was on her, gentle reader. Praise Him!!! This does happen. AND, who can debate fruitfulness in love, single or married, is not found in adoption? 😊

-from <http://www.zenit.org/en/articles/pope-s-morning-homily-marriage-should-reflect-christ-s-fruitful-love-for-his-church>

Pope's Morning Homily: **Marriage Should Reflect Christ's Fruitful Love for His Church**

15 Married Couples Join Pope for Mass in Casa Santa Marta

Vatican City, June 02, 2014

Pope Francis celebrated Mass this morning with a group of married couples at various stages in their life's journey in attendance.

Reflecting on the readings of the day, the focus of the Holy Father's homily were on the faithfulness, perseverance, and fruitfulness of Christ's love for His bride, the Church – three characteristics that are also at the heart of Christian marriage.

Fifteen couples, celebrating between 25 and 60 years' of marriage, were present at the Mass in Casa Santa Marta to give thanks to God for the milestones they've reached.

After the readings of the day, Pope Francis spoke about the three pillars of spousal relationship in the Christian vision of things: fidelity, perseverance, fruitfulness. The Holy Father said that Christ, Himself, is the model measure of these, which the Pope called the **“three loves of Jesus”**: **for the Father, for His mother, and for the Church.** **“Great” is His love for the Church**, said Pope Francis, adding, “Jesus married the Church for love.” She is, he said, **“His bride: beautiful, holy, a sinner, He loves her all the same.”** His way of loving set the three characteristics of this love in relief.

“It is a faithful love. It is a persevering love. He never tires of loving his Church. It is a fruitful love. It is a faithful love,” the Pope said. **“Jesus is the faithful one. St. Paul, in one of his Letters, says that, if you confess Christ, He will confess you, before the Father; if you deny Christ, He will deny**

you; even if you are not faithful to Christ, He remains faithful, for he cannot deny Himself! Fidelity is the essence of Jesus' love. Jesus' love in His Church is faithful. This faithfulness is like a light on marriage. The fidelity of love. Always."

Always faithful, and also indefatigable in its perseverance – just like the love of Jesus for His Bride.

"Married life must be persevering, because otherwise love cannot go forward," the Pope continued. "Perseverance in love, in good times and in difficult times, when there are problems: problems with the children, economic problems, problems here, problems there – but love perseveres, presses on, always trying to work things out, to save the family. Persevering: they get up every morning, the man and the woman, and carry the family forward."

Then the Holy Father discussed the third characteristic: fruitfulness. The love of Jesus, he said, "makes the Church fruitful," providing her with new children through Baptism, and the Church grows with this spousal fruitfulness.

Love,
Matthew

This contribution is available at <http://soul-candy.info/2015/01/love-free-total-faithful-fruitful/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

My 2014 Person of the Year [at Justin's Corner]

On last month's Christmas special edition of

The World Over Live,

EWTN news director Raymond Arroyo offered his pick for 2014 Person of the Year: the persecuted Christians of the Middle East. I felt that this was a good choice because it highlighted the increasingly desperate situation of the ancient Christian communities in Iraq, Syria, and the Holy Land who endured so many terrible sufferings in the past year--wanton terrorist violence, destruction of their churches and other priceless cultural treasures, forced displacement, and even martyrdom for their faith--all largely ignored by an indifferent world. A handful of voices in the wilderness, including Patriarch Sako of Baghdad and Prince Charles of England, courageously and repeatedly attempted to awaken the consciences of world leaders, urging them to do what lay in their power to stop these tragedies, but their appeals generally fell on deaf ears.

The increasingly obvious "globalization of indifference" decried by Pope Francis is indeed a cancer growing within our twenty-first century global society that is eating away at that society from the inside. This indifference is a bitter fruit of the destructive ideology of radical secularism, the pseudo-religion of the post-modern age that sees no need for God or religion in public life or international affairs. One major consequence of this indifference is an alarming erosion of religious freedom around the world, even here in the United States, a traditional haven of religious liberty. We are witnessing the truth of Pope Benedict XVI's statement during his visit to Cuba in March 2012 that "When God is put aside, the world becomes an inhospitable place for man." The words of Saint John Paul II uttered ten years before that remain true today: "The building of a global culture of solidarity is perhaps the greatest moral task confronting humanity today." Popes John Paul, Benedict and Francis have all made quite clear that such a global culture of solidarity cannot be built on moral relativism or religious syncretism or the tyranny of unregulated market forces or any other subjective standards; on the contrary, a thriving global community can only be built on the truly universal objective standards of respect for the natural law and human rights that are deeply engraved in the hearts of all men and women.

The tragically endangered Christian minorities of the Middle East remain in great need of our prayers, compassion, financial support, and political activism on their behalf. If we Catholics and Christians in this country were to unite in prayer and charitable support for these people and rally our nation's leaders to take concrete steps to defend their religious freedom, we could make a tremendous difference in the situation and help rescue Middle Eastern Christians from extinction.

On the subject of religious liberty and in light of the foregoing reflections, I will now offer my own choice for 2014 Person of the Year. Her name is Meriam Yahia Ibrahim Ishag, and she is the young Sudanese Catholic convert who was unjustly incarcerated and condemned to death for renouncing the Islamic faith of her childhood and marrying a Christian man. Meriam's story has certain parallels with the persecuted Christians of the Middle East. Like them, she was persecuted for her Christian faith. Like them, she refused to renounce her Lord and Savior. And like them, her plight was generally ignored by an indifferent world.



But thankfully, in Meriam's case (as also in the case of the Middle Eastern Christians), not all human hearts were coldly indifferent. As the clock ticked down to her scheduled execution immediately following the birth of her second child, millions of people all over the world joined her husband Daniel Wani, a businessman and U.S. citizen, in prayer that her innocent life be spared. And God in His great mercy used the power of prayer to deliver Meriam Ibrahim from death. By negotiating with Sudanese authorities, the Italian government and the Vatican managed to rescue her. Instead of being executed, she was released from prison, then re-arrested, re-released, and finally fled the country with her husband and two children. They arrived first in Italy, where Meriam's dream of someday meeting Pope Francis came true. Then the Sudanese Catholic family headed across the Atlantic to make their permanent home in the United States.

Amid all the terrible things that happened in the world last year, this was a wonderfully refreshing success story for religious liberty. America played its traditional role as a safe haven for victims of religious persecution and as a land of opportunity for immigrants hoping to make a fresh start in life. Catholic leaders in the Vatican and Italy acted as noble defenders of religious liberty, doing battle "in the trenches" behind the scenes to defend the basic right of a single person to hold and practice her faith without government interference. Justice prevailed, and an innocent human life was saved. And because of her courageous dedication to her Christian faith in prison and under threat of death, Meriam Ibrahim now stands before us as a true heroine of religious liberty. May God bless her and her family.

Inspired by Meriam's example, with trust in Divine Providence and under the protection of Mary Immaculate, Patroness of the United States, let us take up with renewed vigor the cause of religious liberty here in America in 2015. Despite numerous court injunctions, the unjust and unconstitutional HHS mandate is still on the books, still attempting to coerce us to violate the natural law and our religious convictions by promoting the murder of the innocent unborn. It is a stain on our national conscience, a blot on our reputation for religious freedom. We must do away with it! Congress must pass legislation to abolish this mandate without further delay. It is of critical importance to the future of America that our First Amendment rights be preserved intact. So let's continue the fight to defend our cherished religious freedom until it is fully restored. It will definitely be worth the effort.

This contribution is available at <http://justins-corner.blogspot.com/2015/01/my-2014-person-of-year.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Why I went to the hospital, and why I didn't tell you

When the buzzer went off Friday night I went to the front rather than the side door. I've used that door maybe two dozen times in my nine years here, but since I'd called the ambulance, responding to the EMTs in the fastest way possible seemed like the polite thing to do.

I'd been in pain for almost a week. The intensity of my intestinal agony came and went and came again, but each time it returned it lasted longer and frightened me more. My mind is conditioned to expect relief from vomiting, so each round of pain came with dehydration and strain. An aching radiated into my back, and when all was at its worst I would sit straight up from whatever posture I'd adopted to quell the pain and combine deep breaths with yelps of pressure and disbelief.

I played mind games, timing the pressure and stabbing sensations, going for long stretches without eating, trying to fool my body into working in a way it hasn't in years.

Finally Friday night my eyes were on the clock again. I'd give myself until 11:00 for the pain to vacate my abdomen. It had passed in only three hours on Monday night. It could pass again. I tried to sleep. I walked around. I pulled at my hair, praying Hail Marys as I paced my apartment. *Mother of God, pray for us, sinners...*

It was midnight. It was time. I considered driving myself the two miles to the ER – it would have been such a short drive with the streets abandoned for the evening. BUt it was cold and I knew being overcome with pain behind the wheel could be dangerous. I logged into my insurance benefits to make sure there was no copay for ambulances. I dialed the phone.

Sue was calm and comforting and let me keep some dignity by allowing me to climb unaided into the back of the ambulance. I was warmly and comfortably dressed with a bag packed full of all I thought I might need in the hospital. The wisecracking driver smoothly took us down the familiar roads to the same hospital where all my doctors are and I screamed just enough to make sure they would urge me through triage.

My plan worked: though my gurney was parked in the hallway for hours I was treated quickly. I writhed a bit, trying again to get whatever was torturing me through my narrowed system. I bolted upright and breathed intensely when I needed to, earning the confused looks of the pill-seekers and Listerine-swiggers at an old indigent hospital after midnight on a sub-zero Friday.

They gave me morphine, finally. I'd had it once before, when I went into the ER on the day my godmother died, when I made the mistake of eschewing an ambulance and was forced to endure the waiting room. I knew how good the morphine would make me feel – indeed I had been dreaming about it all week. When the IV went in I knew what relief might come.

Only an hour and a half later, as I waited for the CT scan that I'd already scheduled for 7:00 but which would be moved up to 5:00 am, my baby-faced doctor offered more morphine in response the returning pain.

“Is that OK?” I asked, concerned about the frequency of the dose, about how badly I needed this relief,

about having spent the last week dreaming of morphine. He smiled and nodded and a nurse came over and I felt the now-familiar feeling of fluid rushing into my IV.

The barium contrast arrived at 4:00 am. I may have known more about it than my delightful ER nurse. I popped the containers open, turned down the accompanying ice cubes, and started chugging. Wheeled into imaging, wheeled back, and all the while I was doing nothing. After the CT scan I was finally in my pathetic hospital johnnie.

I was to be admitted. A GI intern came in to chat. The surgical team, who monitor the floor where I would be staying, visited. I stuck with my habit of cracking jokes and slathering on charm for new doctors.

I was wheeled to a room and immediately told that I was on the wrong floor, but that they would take care of me until a bed opened up on the GI floor. The nurse, Darnelle, offered more morphine. I said I didn't need it. The sun streamed in warm on my back.

As soon as I felt the warmth of the sun through the window I released it all – my expectations of miraculous cures, my insistence that I could soldier through this, my confusion over how still be Me while being sick, my intractable resistance to the hand I've been dealt. I felt whole again, perfectly Me, though now accepting my need. I heard Darnelle's voice and knew she'd take care of me, and I slept.



Maybe I should have told you.

That's what we do these days. The very first ER pix should have been Instagrammed. Sure, I prefer to use Facebook as a forum to show how clever I am, but couldn't I have found a way to do that in the hours after my admission?

I didn't want pity, to be sure, and I didn't want judgement. I didn't want advice, no matter how well-intentioned. I bristle at the assumptions and the misunderstandings.

And there's always someone who wants to jump in with unnecessary help or unwanted company. I told my own mother and fiancé to stay home the first day I was there because I didn't want to watch them sit around. I wouldn't have been able to deal with having to turn down some Oprah-wannabe half-stranger offering awkward companionship.

I thought at first that was why I kept things uncharacteristically private. But I realized it has more to do

with me than with any well-meaning friends.

I am an oversharer by nature. In younger years I blasted the world with my pain indiscriminately, hopeful that by sharing my anguish someone could see and value who I was. I was truly depressed and hated myself and by making that known I hoped someone could put all those pieces together and show me the meaning of suffering.

By years of writing through tragedy and struggles I have learned that meaning-making is my only consolation. When I look ahead to a life of struggle and eventual loss (for how could I not anticipate these things, being Irish and clear-sighted and diseased?) the prospect of making all these things beautiful through emotion and words is the only comfort I anticipate.

I needed to know what my story meant before I could give it away.



I stayed in the hospital until Monday afternoon. I had nothing but time to think and so bombarded my doctors with questions each time they stopped in. I ate jello and pudding and asked my love to drive three hours to see me – and to bring me papers to grade.

On Monday, out of pain and with a plan to stay that way, I slipped back into my pink sneakers and wool coat. Then I eased my shoulders into the backpack I bought for safari this summer and showed myself to the 8th floor elevators. When I reached the lobby the prospect of sunlight and fresh air put a spring in my step as I pushed through the revolving door.

Energized, I bounced across the teaching hospital's campus. It was a quiet holiday so I had little company when I reached the bus stop. I had told the nurse I would take a cab, but the bus goes right by apartment and it wasn't that cold. Though the bus was a few minutes late and the wind picked up I stayed at the stop until my familiar bus came. By the strenght of my own two legs I climbed aboard with my smartly packed bags and the keys in my pocket that would bring me home.

This contribution is available at <http://margaretfelice.com/2015/01/23/why-i-went-to-the-hospital-and-why-i-didnt-tell-you/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Unplug! [at Journey to Wisdom]

A Reflection on Psalm 95:7b-9 N.A.B.



Scripturally “hardness of heart” can mean imperviousness to God’s revelation (Exodus 7:13, Mark 6:52) as well as willful resistance to signs of God’s presence (Mark 8:17). Those who *harden their hearts* refuse to see, hear, or acknowledge God’s attempts to communicate with them.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:

“Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,

as in the day of Massah in the desert,

Where your fathers tempted me;

they tested me though they had seen my works.”

– Psalm 95:7b-9 N.A.B.

Will we hear God today? Maybe. At some point on our spiritual journey, like young Samuel, we have to familiarize ourselves with the Lord’s way.

¹ *During the time young Samuel was minister to the LORD under Eli, a revelation of the LORD was uncommon and vision infrequent.*

² *One day Eli was asleep in his usual place. His eyes had lately grown so weak that he could not see.*

- ³ *The lamp of God was not yet extinguished, and Samuel was sleeping in the temple of the LORD where the ark of God was.*
- ⁴ *The LORD called to Samuel, who answered, “Here I am.”*
- ⁵ *He ran to Eli and said, “Here I am. You called me.” “I did not call you,” Eli said. “Go back to sleep.” So he went back to sleep.*
- ⁶ *Again the LORD called Samuel, who rose and went to Eli. “Here I am,” he said. “You called me.” But he answered, “I did not call you, my son. Go back to sleep.”*
- ⁷ *At that time Samuel was not familiar with the LORD, because the LORD had not revealed anything to him as yet.*
- ⁸ *The LORD called Samuel again, for the third time. Getting up and going to Eli, he said, “Here I am. You called me.” Then Eli understood that the LORD was calling the youth.*
- ⁹ *So he said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” When Samuel went to sleep in his place,*
- ¹⁰ *the LORD came and revealed his presence, calling out as before, “Samuel, Samuel!” Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”*

And if we want to hear him we have to listen intently because God doesn't yell, as evidenced in the First Book of Kings, he whispers:

- ¹¹ *Then the LORD said, “Go outside and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will be passing by.” A strong and heavy wind was rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake.*
- ¹² *After the earthquake there was fire—but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound.*
- ¹³ *When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, “Elijah, why are you here?”*

- 1 Kings 19:11-13 N.A.B.

How hard would it have been for me to hear God while I was watching the broadcast of the New England Patriot / Indianapolis Colt game? Was watching that game a bad thing? I hope not! How hard is it to hear God during a frantic work day? How about while I'm reading the daily news or checking text messages?

Will I hear the Lord in the tranquility of an hour of perpetual adoration? How about during the serenity of contemplative prayer? While reading Holy Scripture? Praying the rosary? Maybe. But if I don't unplug from the world and set time aside for Him, I will never hear Him.

And if I do feel a nudge steering me in one direction or the other, how will I know if it is truly the Lord? I will know that it is Jesus when I am being guided into somehow contributing to the spread of His Kingdom.

This contribution is available at <http://journeytowisdom-ocbs.blogspot.com/2015/01/unplug.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Sklerocordia: hardness of heart and divorce [at LMS Chairman]



In

Remaining in the Truth of Christ

(the 'book of the five Cardinals' defending the Church's discipline on marriage), the biblical data on divorce is discussed by Fr Paul Mankowski SJ. He remarks laconically that today people who uphold Our Lord's teaching on divorce who are accused of being unmerciful, hard of heart, but Jesus tells us that the permission for divorce in the Mosaic law (a permission never made explicit, no more than a reference to the fact that people were divorcing):

'It was for your hardness of heart [Greek: 'sklerocordia'] that Moses gave this commandment.'

(Matthew 19:8)

It was because Jesus wants to break through that hardness of heart, because he offers, to use the phrase of Ezekial (36:26) to replace our heart of stone with a heart of flesh, that he wants to put a stop to divorce, or at least the respectable re-marriage to another spouse which is the hard-hearted intention of most divorces.

One of the reasons that the Church is finding it difficult to hold the line on divorce is that, if we are honest with ourselves, the teaching on the indissolubility of marriage has not been presented with forcefulness for half a century at least. The Church is full of compassion for those who are going through marital difficulties, for the separated, for the divorced, and for the remarried. That is a good thing. But we aren't sent simply to weep by the sidelines; the Church is supposed to have some insight into human nature. What are these people told to

do

? Are they told that divorce and remarriage, as a solution for marital problems, overwhelmingly often has catastrophically bad consequences for both spouses and especially for the children? Are they told that the marriage vow imposes a sacred obligation to remain with one's spouse, that the grace of the sacrament will assist with the common life of marriage, and that infidelity is poison to the life of grace and to the marital relationship?

I know that there are some priests, some catechists and people doing marriage preparation, and some theologians writing on these matters, who do say these things, but they need to say them more loudly if they want to be heard over the din of the values and customs of the World. The message that a lot of Catholics hear is that many divorces can be 'sorted out' with the help of a little canon-law jiggery pokery (perhaps, jiggery-popery)

What we need to bear in mind is that the line taken by the world is that married people can divorce if they consider themselves

unhappy.

How dreadful, the wordlings say, to be 'trapped in a loveless marriage': 'loveless', by which they do not mean abusive, intolerable, or invalid, or a marriage where the spouse refuses to have children or insists on aborting them, where the spouse is an alcoholic or a criminal, or anything like that. A marriage can, and perhaps should, be destroyed, the World informs us, if it doesn't make one of the spouses

happy,

which is understood as meaning that it fails to deliver that

romantic tingle

which is everyone's

inalienable right

Remarriage, of course, is the whole point of such divorces: not

physical

separation from a wife-beating maniac for the sake of the children (perhaps followed by recourse to civil divorce to enforce the just distribution of assets): no,

legal

separation from a nice but boring spouse for marriage with the glamorous alternative who will fulfill one's dreams.

Denying a core doctrine of the World always takes a bit of effort, a courageous moral effort and an effort of proclamation to get the message across. I ask again, do Catholics and non-Catholics understand clearly that the Church condemns utterly this worldly thinking? That it is what Our Lord and Merciful Saviour called

hardness of heart

? Or are we inclined to sympathise publicly with the divorcing party and tell him or her how glad we are when, as it may appear, he or she has at last 'found happiness'?

There are some indications that the latter is more the case. On a blog by an Evangelical concerned to defend marriage I found a

[some pretty](#)

shocking

[examples](#)

of

[responses to questions](#)

on the 'Catholic Answers' website, which completely failed to take the opportunity presented to remind enquirers of the beautiful teaching of the Church, and of Christ, on marriage, and which suggest a deep reluctance to oppose the teaching of the World. There is more to the Church than Catholic Answers, I know, but it is a straw in the wind.



It is not enough to keep repeating that the Church 'officially' sees marriage as for life; the same sentiment is written up in the UK's Registry Offices. Everyone regards marriage as being, officially, ideally, 'for life'; the interesting question is about the possibility of

trading up:

getting a better spouse, often having enjoyed the flower of the first wife's youth, or continuing to enjoy the flower of the first husband's money. Do we regard this as utterly abominable, in the same class as other kinds of sexual abuse and economic enslavement? Do we say loudly and clearly that this is unjustified, always and everywhere?

Even when the party at issue tells us it was done for the sake of

happiness

? For that

romantic tingle

which, the World says, is the key to the meaning of life?

If we are going to deny this, friends, we need to do so loudly enough to be heard.

Support the work of the LMS by becoming an '

[Anniversary Supporter](#)

!

This contribution is available at <http://www.lmschairman.org/2015/02/sklerocordia-hardness-of-heart-and.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Exciting! New Latin Mass Initiative Occurring in Campbellford, Ontario at St. Mary's Church [at Servimus unum Deum]

Hello Everyone,

As promised, I am going to highlight a brand new Latin Mass initiative that has occurred in the province of Ontario! For those of you who haven't caught my last few posts, I am expanding some of my coverage (regular offerings and on the most important feast days) to include other (arch)dioceses of Ontario. What I will speak about is now a regular listing.

Furthermore, the priest in charge of this listing has been a great, faithful Holy Priest who has frequently assisted the St. Patrick's Gregorian Choir in their offerings of the Latin Mass in the Archdiocese of Toronto, travelling much a distance to aid the choir. Telling you about the initiative he leads is the least someone like myself involved in the Latin Mass can do for such an

Alter Christi.

The Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish (a.k.a. St. Mary's), Campbellford, Ontario, CANADA



Taken from <http://www.saintmaryschurch.info/>

St. Mary's is a Catholic Church that is in the diocese of Peterborough, Ontario. The diocese covers the more northern regions of Ontario.

As per its website, (<http://www.saintmaryschurch.info/#!/about/aboutPage>

): "It was founded in the late 1800's and the present building was erected in 1900 when the previous building underwent a fire during the night of Christmas Eve to Christmas Morning, in December 1899."

The parish is attached to the local school of same namesake, and has the basic ministries and organizations of most catholic parishes at the moment: e.g. Catholic Women's League, Knights of Columbus Chapter, Society of St. Vincent De Paul, Altar Serving, Lectoring ...

The parish contact information is here:

Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Parish

21 Centre St. - P.O. Box 599

Campbellford, ON K0L 1L0

Canada

Tel: 705-653-1093

Fax: 705-653-1093

Email: visitation@eastlink.ca

Pastor of the Parish, Fr. Jean-Pierre Pilon

Fr. Jean-Pierre Pilon, has been the pastor of St. Mary's since 2010. He is especially well suited for the implementation and celebration of the Extraordinary Form of the Roman Rite/Latin Mass, due to his extensive background.

Fr. Pilon was ordained by well-known traditionalist bishop, Bp. Fabian Bruskewitz, formerly of the archdiocese of Lincoln, Nebraska, in 2002, after his seminary training at Our Lady of Guadalupe seminary of the Priestly Fraternity of St. Peter, although he is not currently a permanent member with the designate title, FSSP, of the fraternity. Instead he switched gears and became a Franciscan Friar. This was until his order dissolved and this resulted in his incardination into the diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania, USA. Before coming to St. Mary's in 2010, he had also done some chaplaincy work in Europe in France and Ireland.

Regardless of the twists and turns of his journey as a priest, Fr. Pilon's experience in the FSSP seminary in Nebraska gave him the capabilities to carry out the Latin Mass at its various levels.

Establishment of the Latin Mass Initiative INCLUDING Sunday Obligation in the Diocese of Peterborough

While the Latin Mass had been said in private without permission, according to normal Church Laws, (e.g. Summorum Pontificum and Ecclesiae Unitatem) by Fr. Pilon, Toronto's former auxiliary bishop, now Ordinary for the diocese of Peterborough, Bishop William McGrattan, formally gave permission to establish Sunday obligation Masses for the Extraordinary Form at St. Mary's.

This permission was graciously given, as a number of parishioners in the archdiocese and neighboring townships (e.g. Keene) have expressed interest in the Latin Mass, wanting more than just random private offerings.

The first regular Sunday Mass for the Extraordinary Form was December 14, 2014. This offering will be part of St. Mary's

on the Second, Third, and in 5-week months, the 4th, Sundays of the Month, at 12:30pm.

This offering complements an already existing offering at

[Our Lady of the Assumption \(Mission - St. John the Evangelist\) Catholic Church](#)

in Keene, Ontario, where they hold the Latin Mass at 12:30pm on the 1st and last Sundays of the month.

Currently, the offerings for the Latin Mass at St. Mary's will be the Low Mass with Chant. Besides when the priest chants in the Mass, the organ and choir chant portions, such as propers, are being provided by a retired parishioner, a former music professor (Ph.D.) As for the serving portions, a couple of young men have willfully come forward to Fr. Pilon and have been sufficiently trained for serving the Mass.

There are plans to develop both a schola and the serving program in the future, which could also lead to the ability to offer Masses of the higher levels in future.

In addition to the already beautiful facade and interior of the church, there are plans underway to restore the parish bells to working condition. This project is not just a renewal of the physical aspects of the Church, but it also reflects the spiritual life of the parish and its parishioners. Should one want to find out more information about this project and donate by Internet via PayPal, then you can click on this link:

<http://www.saintmaryschurch.info/#!/history/c8de>

Therefore, I ask you, should your travels but out in Peterborough on a Sunday afternoon, may you consider and support this beautiful new offering in the Latin Mass at St. Mary's. This is an exciting new venture and there should be many more good things to come in future of it.

Pax Tibi Christi, Julian Barkin.

This contribution is available at <http://torontotlmserving.blogspot.ca/2015/01/exciting-new-latin-mass-initiative.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Praying as a Disciple [at Bartimaeus' Quiet Place]

Praying as a Disciple ...

Letting the Holy Spirit Help us in our weakness



Deep Spiritual Prayer – Rises to the Highest

“... if we hope for what we do not see, with perseverance we wait eagerly for it. And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for {us} with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to {the will of} God. And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to {His} purpose.” (Rom. 8:25-29)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today, I am writing about one of the greatest deterrents for those just entering into a discipleship relationship with Jesus, And here, I am presupposing that you have already gotten past the primary deterrent, and that is understanding what is it that entails a true discipleship with our Lord and Master. It is, of course, more than just believing in Jesus and being Christian, it is a conscious decision to no longer live for yourself but to let Jesus live and reign in you and through you. It is setting for yourself the goal that St. Paul set for himself, namely....

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ living in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.” (Gal. 2:20)

About Entering into Discipleship

In this new life we enter when we come into true discipleship, we leave behind, the apparently noble, but yet self-driven independent intent to dedicate ourselves to doing things “for” Christ, to that of yielding ourselves so completely that the Spirit of Christ that is in us takes over all that we do or think or say. In this manner, it is He, and He alone, who is working in us, and who manifests His Kingship in us and through us by using us as His bond-servants to manifest the Father’s Perfect will in this world. That is why the “Our Father “ prayer (Matt.6:9-13) He gave his disciples should really be called the “Disciples Prayer” for in this prayer He clearly states the commitment to the Father’s Kingship over us that brings us

to discipleship in the first place.

Unfortunately, this statement of commitment that yields our “self” to God is not truly understood as intended, by us moderns. Restating the commitment statement in modern terms, it should probably be read as...

“Father, I yield my “self” completely to your Kingship, over me, so that Your Will may be done in me and through me, here on earth just as it is in Heaven”

Here, you see, what the term, ***“thy Kingdom Come”*** really is intended to mean in the Lord’s prayer.

So if this meaning is only just being made clear to you, I suggest that you pray about it and let the Holy Spirit bring you to that same understanding so that you may proceed along the path to discipleship.

“If any man comes unto me, and hates not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yes, even his own “self” as well, he cannot be my disciple. Whosoever does not bear [this] his own [personal] cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26-27)

Accentuating our call to discipleship, there is of course, Paul’s exhortation to the Romans:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may understand what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

About Praying as a Disciple

Now, getting back to my other point on the second-most important deterrent to a life of active discipleship, and that is a continuous dedication to deep and intimate prayer with God. And by prayer I mean a life of continuous personal dialogue with the Divine, be it the Father, The Son, or the Holy Spirit. A dialogue where you spend much of your time listening to what the Spirit of God is saying to you and asking Him any questions you wish to ask regarding His purposes for you and your life. Without such a fellowship with God you cannot follow through on your commitment to discipleship.

Here is what Jesus says on this subject:

“But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. I and my Father are one.” (John 10: 26-30)

Of course, it is a given, that if you hear His Voice, and listen and converse with God, your commitment to Him and His word will lead you to obey and live by what He says.

“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have

fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.” (John 1: 5-10)

An active and pure prayer life combined with meditation on His Word is essential to keeping on the path to life and maintaining ourselves as instruments of His Love. Prayer is what keeps us in His Kingdom.

Our problem as humans is that not all of us understand how to enter into such a prayerful communion with God and how to bring that communion into our everyday lives. The main reason being that we have been brought up to think that our secular lives are to be lived separately from our religious lives. Oh yes. We understand that we need to behave morally and equitably in the world, but most of us moderns think that God is not interested in our decisions at work and the business world – that all He wants of us is to behave morally.

No! My brothers and sisters. The Father, through His Son Jesus, desires that we invite Him into every aspect of our lives. We have to realize that when we enter into discipleship with Jesus, we are entering into a partnership with the Father so that He is involved in every aspect of our lives. This is the way that the Father uses our persons to bring His Kingdom into this world . For in this way, the Spirit of Jesus, uses us in manifesting the Kingdom of His Love into this world. This is what it means when we pray or act in “Jesus’ Name”. When we do things in our name, we are NOT building His Kingdom, His Kingdom can only be manifested when we act and pray “in His Name!”, and not in ours.

Jesus, does not assert Himself over us. He always asks us to invite Him into our lives and our affairs. He will not violate our free will because His Love can be manifest only out of our “agape” or selfless willingness to yield our selves to Him. Here is what He says to us:

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:20-21)

Now, in order to maintain a prayer life that is fruitful we must take care that our prayer be consistent with His Word. For that reason a part of our prayer life must be dedicated to meditation on His Word. It is through prayerful meditation on the Word that the Holy Spirit inspires our prayer life with the appropriate segments His Word to empower our prayers to be representative of a Holy Spirit empowered prayer for a particular intention.

A Story – In order to make a point

In order to give you a concrete example of how prayer can be brought into our everyday lives, I am going to propose a very real-world type of situation where a young man and his wife are involved in initiating a new business which will be operated mutually between them. They are making this intent because through certain situations in their lives their family economics are in a crisis situation but also because they have entered in to a discipleship relationship with Jesus, they have been led, through prayer and meditation, that Jesus has indicated to them that He wants to join them in the start-up of a new business – He wants to be their partner!

In order to understand how this situation suddenly came about and why Jesus wants to be involved, consider for instance, that the husband has just been laid off from his professional job, and the wife, who a year ago just gave birth to twins, is just now getting back to working part time. The income crisis upon them is such that there is no way they can cover their family expenses.

But why are they not panicking? Instead what they do is turn immediately to the person they have been in fellowship and dialogue for the last 6 years. After breakfast each morning they invite Jesus to join them during their day and ask Him to take over the events of that day for His Glory. They place the entire situation in His hands and ask him to guide each of them in the affairs of the coming day.

Because, they have both entered into a personal discipleship with Jesus, they are not dismayed at the circumstances they are facing. Rather, they know that, for those that love Him and are called according to His purposes (ie., called to be disciples), all the circumstances in their lives can work for His Glory (Rom. 8:28) as long as we discern them and dedicate them for His Glory. In these situations He uses not only our prayers but those of our prayer partners, such as with our parents to work out His plan to redeem the circumstances and not only rescue us from them but to redeem them for His Glory (to understand this read again the story of Joseph, Genesis 37-45).

The Lord works in the life situations of disciples in a variety of ways, but all begin with disciples inviting the Lord into their specific situation. And not only their own personal prayers, but also those of their prayer partners such as their parents,

In this particular instance God, the Father, begins to help the couple by placing in their hearts the desire to start their own business. Their inspired dream is somewhat based on contacts the husband has made and their mutual talents. But they, in their commitment to the Lord, have placed this dream before Him in prayer and, in response, both have received a certain peace about what is in their hearts regarding the fulfillment of this dream or desire.

The wife's parents, praying on their own, have also received some assurance of the Lord's favor on their children's desired venture. In communicating their inspiration to them, they propose to the couple that if this business is His will for them, let them pray that if the Lord provide a client who will provide them initial support, they in turn, for this sign from the Lord, will dedicate themselves and the new business to the Lord and, that through their commitment, more souls may be brought into His Kingdom as they interface with the public.

No sooner had they prayed that, out of the blue, to their surprise one of the husband's prior contacts tells him that he has a client that is willing to give them the initial support they were praying for. They immediately take that as a sign that the Lord is encouraging them to begin the new business. After meeting with the client, who by the way offers them a place for the business, they go to their lawyers and initiate the business under very favorable conditions.

In order to help them further in satisfying their commitment to Jesus, the wife's parents provide them with a prayer of dedication to the Lord that integrates the Word of God with their business intentions. They have come to the wording of this prayer through meditation and prayer so they truly believe the Holy Spirit is guiding them to provide this prayer to them. They, then, ask the couple to pray and meditate on what they have provided them in order to complete the dedication of their new business to the Lord.

The couple agree to their proposal and after praying over the materials given them they, as a couple pray

to dedicate themselves and their business together for the Glory of the Father and in thanksgiving for what the Lord has done for them.

The following is the material that the couple took to themselves to pray over ...

- ***Psalm 37 (NASB2)***

1Do not fret because of evildoers, Be not envious toward wrongdoers.

2For they will wither quickly like the grass, And fade like the green herb.

3Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land and cultivate faithfulness.

4Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.

5Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, and He will do it.

6And He will bring forth your righteousness as the light, And your judgment as the noonday.

- ***Prayer of Dedication, in accord with Psalm 37***

We thank you Father for placing your desires for us in our hearts.

We also thank you Father for the Blessings you have given us in our new business. We consider this business as the “Land “in which you have placed us to “Dwell”. We therefore dedicate this “Land” to you and we dedicate ourselves to “Delight” in you and your Word through meditation and prayer. We confide in your promise that by being faithful to you and committing ourselves to You, You will guide us in our business by placing Your desires for this business in our heart. And, that, by committing our plans and our trust to You, then, You, and You alone, will bring all our plans to fulfillment thus vindicating our trust in You and Your Compassionate Love.

We pray this in the Name of Jesus Your Son for the sake of Your Glory working in our Lives. Amen and Amen.

In Conclusion ...

This narrative that I have just provided could have been the experience of any faithful believer or believers who acted and prayed in faith on God’s Word. However, if these are not committed disciples, the Holy Spirit would have a harder time working with them because, since they are not in constant dialogue with the Divine, the believers would probably not have been sensitive to the way the Lord was nudging them to pray, especially, in their invitation to the Lord to work in them and through them in their specific situation.

Discipleship IS NOT a way to earn the Lord’s favor for anything– no, it is our way of yielding ourselves to the Lord to permit Him to work in our life circumstances to fulfill His Purposes and for His Glory, not ours! That is why we have to empty ourselves to Him so that He may fill us with His Spirit so that He and He alone may be glorified in us and through us! Blessed Be His Name Forever! Amen!

Brethren, I submit this writing to you, mainly to incite you to ask the Holy Spirit reveal Himself to you in a very personal way so that He, and He alone, can teach you what you need to hear so that you may invite Him into the very special circumstances you are being submitted to at this moment in your life, and that in so doing you also may see the Lord's Glory manifest itself in your lives! May it be so in Jesus' Name! Amen and Amen

Now, for your benefit, I re-state Paul's prayer for the Ephesians ...

“ ... that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man; so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; {and} that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fulness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him {be} the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:16-21)

May the Lord be truly with you as you continue in your walk with Him. Praised Be His Holy Name!

Your Brother and fellow Pilgrim in Christ Jesus ... Bartimaeus

(© B.R.Timeo and Bartimaeus' Quiet Place, [2008-2015])

Related Text Article Links ...

[*Prayer to Receive the Holy Spirit*](#)

[*Cast Your Net On the Other Side*](#)

[*Hearing God's Voice and ...*](#)

Related Video Links ...

[*About the Holy Spirit*](#)

This contribution is available at <http://quietplace4prayer.wordpress.com/2015/01/30/8-praying-as-a-disciple-2/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

How to Win the First Battle of Every Day

Returning to [our series on daily prayer](#), one of the most important parts of every day is also one of the hardest battles to fight. **Simply put, it is the alarm clock.**



It may seem like a small battle that does not really affect our day and yet, if we fail to discipline our bodies at the very start of each day, how much harder will it be to do something heroic during the rest of the day?

Saint Josemaria Escriva is well known for what he called the “**heroic minute**.” He wrote:

Many good Christians develop the habit of giving their first thought of the day to God. The “heroic minute” follows: it facilitates the Morning Offering and getting the day off to a good start. *The heroic minute. It is the time fixed for getting up. Without hesitation: a supernatural reflection and ... up. The heroic minute: here you have a mortification that strengthens your will and does no harm to your body. If, with God’s help, you conquer yourself, you will be well ahead for the rest of the day.*

It’s so discouraging to find oneself beaten at the first skirmish (St. Josemaria Escriva, *The Way*).

How many times do we hit the “snooze” button? **It is interesting to think how simple and how hard this first battle is every day!**

When a person thinks about mortification, fasting or penance, the imagination typically pictures us wearing some sort of penitential hairshirt and eating only bread and water for 40 days. However, for some of us the “heroic minute” seems much more daunting!

It is the first “skirmish” of the day and is the first time we can combat the desires of the flesh. With this first victory, we will feel much more able to take on the day and defeat any other enemies that may come. For example, for someone who is struggling with an addiction (like pornography, alcohol, or drugs), the “heroic minute” becomes a vital part of disciplining the will so that it is easier to say no to a sinful habit.

This also helps us with the battle of daily prayer. If we are able to give to God the very first fruits of our day, there is a more likely chance that we will offer to God the remainder of our day.

Serviam!

A common practice for those in Opus Dei is to practice the “heroic minute” by getting up immediately when the alarm sounds, kneel down, kiss the floor, and say “**Serviam!,**” which is Latin for “**I will serve!**”

The reasoning behind this comes from the defiance of Satan who said, “Non Serviam” (I will *not* serve). These words of Satan do not come from Scripture, but from Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. Even though the words aren’t biblical, they do reflect the reality of Satan’s decision to not serve God.

By saying “Serviam,” instead of becoming a part of Satan’s legion of rebels, we choose each day to be a part of God’s army and to serve Him with a willing heart.

Challenge: Tomorrow, when you wake-up don’t press the snooze button. Get out of bed and say “Serviam!” Then you will have already won your first battle of the day and will be strengthened to conquer the rest of the dragons that will try to bring you down.

Read the Entire Series

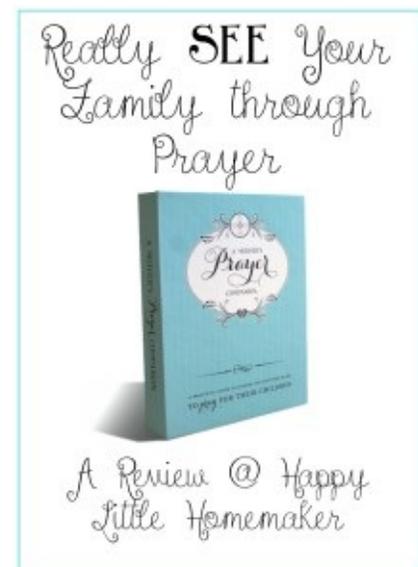
This contribution is available at <http://www.philipkosloski.com/how-to-win-the-first-battle-of-every-day/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Really SEE Your Kids Through God's Eyes (Book Review) [at Happy Little Homemaker]

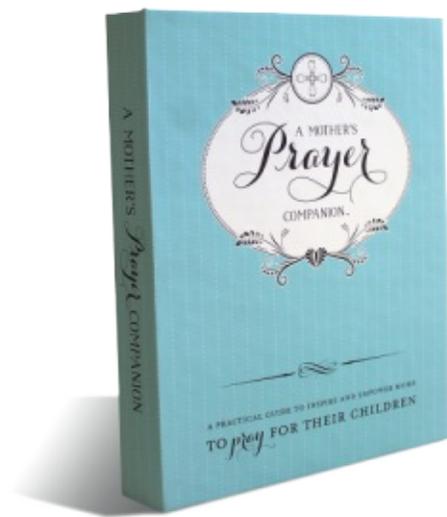
Disclaimer: I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

I have to be honest. While I know prayer should be first and foremost, it's not. I read books on praying for different aspects of my children's life and it all sounds great. And I totally fall short. My prayer life consists of (sometimes) morning prayers, bedtime prayers and short "Lord, please help x with x" when I see prayer requests come through email or social media.



One of my priorities this year was to do better in that arena this year. Right around the time I was making that goal, I saw a short mention from a blogger friend about [A Mother's Prayer Companion](#) and how much it changed her prayer life. So of course I emailed Jenny pretty much that day :). And my friend was right. A Mother's Prayer Companion has changed my prayer life.

A Mother's Prayer Companion is a beautiful muted aqua binder that guides you through prayer for your family, your sons, your daughters, your spouse, and yourself. The pages are printed on a luxurious ivory card stock and the binder kit includes pages for 1 family, 3 daughters, 3 sons, your husband, yourself and those you have promised to pray for. It's about a half-page size and if you have a big purse or a diaper bag, you could totally put it in there for praying on the go.



The formula for prayers is pretty typical — Praise/Adoration, Thanksgiving & Intercession and includes the bible verses that you are praying for your loved ones. The thing that makes [A Mother's Prayer Companion](#) life changing FOR ME is the customization that you can do. Many prayer journals have a generic (*insert name here*) wherever your child or spouse's name should be. This book has a blank line so you can write their name, making prayer seamless and natural. There is a place to write their gifts and talents (under thanksgiving) and another to write prayer requests (intercession). And the most important piece, in my opinion, is the place to add a photo.



I am a hurry, rush, get it done kind of person. I know by now that it is a double-edged sword. In the past, I've prayed for each of my family members as a kind of checklist and something to knock off my to-do list. The particular layout of [A Mother's Prayer Companion](#) causes me to slow down and ponder the person I'm praying for. Especially the child above. She is the one who will sanctify me. Do you have one of those?

Sitting down to pray for her and looking at her funny little grin makes me appreciate her (many) good qualities. Praising God for her and how he made her and her many gifts puts me in a completely different mind set. It helps me to remember that she is exactly as God made her. However much she might drive me insane! I am able to slow down and really pray for her from my heart. This prayer journal takes the normal obstacles to my prayer and cancels many of them out.

[A Mother's Prayer Companion](#) is a fabulous resource for praying for your family for any Christian woman. Since she included enough pages for 3 boys and 3 girls, I also have a section devoted to each of my Godchildren. This would make an excellent prayer journal for grandmothers also. Meant to take 10-15 minutes per person, you don't have to pray for each person every day. I pray a section or two each day that I make the time to do so. It has really helped me to be more patient and loving toward my family in addition to actually praying for them. Good fruit all around!

Do you pray for your family regularly?

Jen S

This contribution is available at <http://www.happylittlehomemaker.com/2015/01/really-see-kids-gods-eyes-book-review/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Gazing Through the Knothole [at Mere Observations]

Last night while on my knees next to my daughter's bed I tucked in a little girl who asked me a big question.

“What will we do if Nolan dies?”

I had asked her if she was ready to see her oldest brother again when he had graduated from boot camp and was a Marine. “Yes,” she said, her head settled onto her pink pillow and blue eyes locking onto mine. “But what will we do if he dies during the next four years?”

I pulled back to look at her and there were tears in her eyes, trickling down each cheek. As I moved to wipe them away she moved her hand quickly to her face and did so before I could.

I didn't know what to say. I assured her that he'd be safe. That he and his Marine brothers were training to ensure such a thing wouldn't happen. I hugged her close.

As will happen with my mostly matter-of-fact and practical daughter this moment passed swiftly and she soon made a joke, said her goodnight, and shooed me out the door.

She's quite bright, and growing up in a house with two older brothers and a dad who watch John Wayne westerns and Peter Jackson visualizations of the battles of Middle-Earth has made her aware of the fact that well...it is a fact that soldiers die.

Soldiers + Battle = A chance of death

Nolan will be a Soldier, ergo she now sees that

Nolan + Battle = A chance of death

I had always danced around that possibility with her. But as I said, she's quite bright this young one.

The October day that he left for boot camp we stopped to pray in a roadside chapel along the interstate between Omaha and Lincoln. We continue to pray each day, at Mass, and each Sunday late afternoon/early evening we four pray a family rosary together. Except this last Sunday we didn't. I don't know how or why but we forgot. This was not unnoticed by my daughter. Before I closed the door I turned and told her to continue to pray for Nolan's safety.

“We forgot to pray our rosary on Sunday, dad.”

“Yes, Sophie, we did.”

Turning to face the wall she said “We need to remember better.”

“Yes Sophie, we do. How about we do one tomorrow night after your brother and I return from his practice?”

“Ok. Good.” <yawn>

“Goodnight Sophie. I love you punkin.”

“Goodnight Dad. I love you too.”

I have been surprised to learn just how lonely a place it is to be the parent of someone in the military. Our “family” has expanded in a sense as we’ve met many other parents going through the same ordeal in online forums, and friends of mine that I know personally have been warm, supportive and encouraging. But in the end you are alone. Alone when you see how much your son’s peers have moved on. How carefree and different their lives are whereas just a calendar year ago they were doing the same things in the same classrooms or same ball fields. As parents we all shared in these things together. Now I feel as distant from them as I did before we met.

“It’s part of the growing up process. It’s normal. It would be the same had he gone to college” I tell myself, and it’s true.

But it’s different. Much different.

So different that it brings tears to a little sister’s face and dampens her pillow.

It’s tempting to wallow in self-pity, especially during the holidays. But I’ve always tried to be a “big picture” kind of guy. I try to maintain perspective. Believe it or not I am an optimist.



Life is like looking through a knothole in a wood fence. You can see whatever passes by the knothole, but not the whole picture. God knows the bigger picture, and all is well in it. We are being blessed right now even if we are only looking through the knothole and don’t see all the good that God has planned for us. We must trust. When you feel the pangs of struggle, turn your gaze and know that you are cherished by God. Your human past or present might leave a lot to be desired. But your spiritual now is filled with love. My daughter has not learned this yet, which is where my experience and guidance is best served.

I love to keep the Psalms close which is why I pray the Divine Office. It has become so much a part of who I am and my day overall that I am aware of the emptiness when I fail to do so. It is a part of the rhythm of my life.

There are two other prayers that I pray each day. I began to pray the *Anima Christi* on my knees after returning from Holy Communion. I will let the Eucharist dissolve slowly in my mouth, consciously absorbing every fiber of the host and Body of Christ. This is warmth. This is safety. This is Eternity.

This prayer attributed to one of my spiritual mentors and favorite saints, Ignatius of Loyola (who was also a soldier before becoming a priest) is one that I've prayed and meditated upon many times. I closed my final letter to Nolan at boot camp with it.

ANIMA CHRISTI

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me.

Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

Good Jesus, hear me.

In your wounds, hide me.

Apart from you let me never be.

From the enemy, defend me.

At the hour of my death, call me.

And close to you bid me,

*that with your saints I may always be
praising you eternally. Amen.*

Right below this prayer in my Daily Roman Missal is another prayer that I've now made a part of this time with God. It has become my prayer for 2015 and indeed the rest of my life. I will continue to pray them in order to keep my gaze on God and not on my struggle as seen through a knothole.

SELF-DEDICATION TO JESUS CHRIST (OBLATIO SUI)

Lord, take all my freedom. Accept my memory, my understanding, and my will. You have given me all that I have or hold dear. I return it to you, that it may be governed by your will. Give me only your grace and the gift of loving you, and I will be rich enough; I will ask for nothing more. Amen.

ADDENDUM:

As I was proofreading this post and about to hit "Publish" my mobile phone rang at 4:45pm. I knew from other recruit parents that phone calls were being made from a certain area code by our recruits to finalize travel arrangements post-graduation. This would be Nolan.

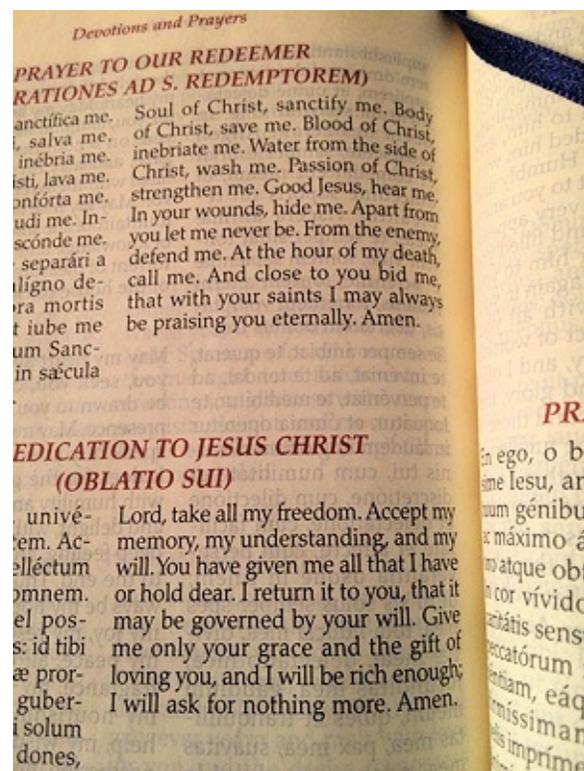
When I answered the phone I heard his voice for the first time since Oct. 27th. He sounded strong and normal; his already deep voice sounding even deeper. As soon as he recognized my voice answering him back his tone immediately changed. And then my 6'3" 185 pound soon-to-be-Marine began to sob. I knew the call was monitored and there were to be no questions other than those related to travel. So I kept on task and I asked him if he'd received the ticket information I'd sent to him two weeks ago and if we were all set. His voice was still breaking but he seemed to recognize what I was trying to do and he said "Yes,

we should be set.”

I told him I loved him and that we’d see him soon. And then we hung up.

The entire conversation lasted 43 seconds.

My son turns 19 in two days. I forgot to wish him Happy Birthday.



This contribution is available at <http://jeffwalker.wordpress.com/2015/01/06/gazing-through-the-knothole/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

"Home" School [at Our Home.... Under Mary's Mantle]

JANUARY 23, 2015

“What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like.”

– St. Augustine

Today is a beautiful day in Fort Worth. It's 50 & sunny and we have a fire going... a) because we love a good fire and b) because it will be in the 30's later. So – we are enjoying the warmth it gives, saving our heater from running...

We ditched formal school today. HA However, I submit my seven reasons my homeschooler still got school in today! *You're welcome... just in case you want to use them!*

1) **Analytical Thinking.** We are working on a beautiful puzzle. And just in case you don't know, it is too school. [Proof that Puzzles Are Good For Students!](#)

Jigsaw puzzles are excellent brain training and co-ordination improvement tools and are quite fun! In particular, they develop your abilities to reason, analyze, sequence, deduce, logical thought processes and problem solving skills. These types of puzzles also improve hand-eye co-ordination and develop a good working sense of spatial arrangements. In schools and other training establishments, jigsaw puzzles are extensively used as learning aids.



2) **Science.** We watched a Falcon stalk a song-bird in our bushes. Ok Ok – I was focused on the falcon. I ran to get our camera. And as I go to the window, it had launched from our tree, and plucked the little bird

out of the bushes. Then my son called his daddy and proceeded to look Falcons up. We concluded it was a Falcon because it 1) ate a songbird and 2) killed it with his/her beak. (Hawks catch with talons). And voila – we have science.

- 3) **Math.** We are making bread. AND we doubled the recipe. Math that tastes good is always a plus. The Honey Wheat Bread from an old acquaintance never fails.
- 4) **Culinary Arts.** See bread above. AND toss in the shrimp, broccoli and pasta the student is cooking this evening.
- 5) **Custodial Engineering.** The boy is vacuuming as we speak. His bed is made. His playroom is reasonable.
- 6) **P.E.** Two miles on the treadmill and weight work when daddy gets home.
- 7) **Reading.** Two chapters of his book report book. He also answered questions. YAY.

Now, ya'll have a great rest of your day. And don't be afraid to have school in an unconventional way.

My bread is rising and it's almost time to bake.

Many blessings this weekend.

Emily

This contribution is available at <http://ourhomemarysmantle.wordpress.com/2015/01/23/7qtf-home-school/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Tales from the Substitute: Compassion in Action [at FranciscanMom]

I was in the fourth grade today. The teacher had a death in the family and was attending the funeral.



And the kids blew me away with their compassion. I was reaching for a tissue at 8:05 AM.

As soon as they walked in (and before I even got a “good morning”) two kids were waving a huge piece of construction paper in my face.

“We’re working on a card! We have to get it done!”

I slowed them down long enough to determine that they had started working on a sympathy card for their teacher. These boys had come up with this idea on their own, and they were bent on getting it finished.

They got busy drawing enough lines inside the card so that every single fourth-grader in the school had a place to sign it—as well as the other fourth-grader teacher and me.

Checking the lesson plan, I figured out a good time for the boys to take the card around the classrooms for signatures.

Many of the students left encouraging messages on the other side of the card, in addition to signing their names.

My plan, before school, was to steal a few moments during religion class to have the students make cards for the teacher. I didn’t need to do that, because the kids took the initiative and had that giant card started first thing in the morning.

I’m sure their teacher felt all the prayers the children sent up today, and I know that when she returns to the classroom her heart will be touched by their very real, very spontaneous, very urgent compassion.

Image source: [Wikipedia](#). Approved for reuse.

| [Contents](#) |

A Passing Look At Football [at Musings of a Missionary in the Modern World]



This is a hard article to write because I love football. I come from a family of nine: Mom, Dad, 6 brothers and myself. From late August through January, the Sunday family ritual always included football. Packers football. No question. We all went to Mass together, and when we came home, Dad gave Mom a break by feeding all of us ham and rolls from the local bakery.

Then, we settled in front of the TV for time together, united in one and the same desire for a good game and a win for our team. It was something we were all a part of. As a girl, I was not excluded. A fan is a fan after all! We loved being able to throw ourselves into the game with Dad. And he enjoyed teaching us all he knew. As a result, I can talk football with the best of them. Every game links me back to the feels, smells, tastes and high excitement of Sunday afternoons growing up.

So what is the problem? It is difficult to admit but my observation is that football today (which I still watch and enjoy) has become a kind of liturgy of the secular culture. And unfortunately, it is the only "liturgy" many people participate in on a weekend.

Humor me for a minute and consider the typical game. There is a communal gathering, most often on a Sunday. People arrive hours ahead of time, prepared to celebrate. They are willing to sit in open air stadiums, through rain, sleet, snow and even subzero temps, hoping to participate in their teams' victory. The Game begins with an entrance procession in which the specially vested (uniformed) enter the sanctuary (I mean arena). An opening hymn (National Anthem) is sung. The seating of the congregation (fans/crowd) takes place, and the beginning of long commentaries (or mini homilies) on the game play starts. The crowd has the "appropriate" responses, before, during and after. And, of course, there is special football food and drink. The homage paid is evidenced by the offering of incredible amounts of time, money and attention on both sides of the ball, by the Management, and by the fans. All elements of Liturgy, but without the Divine. Interesting.

I find myself wondering about these players today. There are many I admire, who acknowledge God for their gifts and express gratitude for His help. (I do wonder if they're given time on Game Day for worship.) But there are also many I've had to mentally "unfriend" after learning about the lack of integrity in their personal lives. This is not because I am any better than anyone out there. I have my sins too. But at the same time being gifted doesn't give anyone the right to behave like a jerk, especially as a public figure who has a part in shaping the attitudes of youth. No free passes here.

Disinhibition is a growing contemporary phenomenon that is alive and well in the world of sports. Fame nowadays seems to give stars license to do and say almost anything they feel like, with little repercussion. It can bring out the worst, just as it does on the internet, where there seems to be hardly a filter left. (Witness the commentary after any article or post. It is 90 % negative, filled with incivility and vitriol. It is embarrassing to see the level that people regress to when there is no moderating influence on them.)

Personally, I prefer to see character, not beast mode, on display. It is mortifying to see grown men behave with vulgarity and crudeness, braggadocio and temper tantrums, gifted or not. Ego can be an ugly thing to watch. And were it not for penalties for unsportsmanlike conduct, who knows how far it would go?

When I discover I have been duped by a public persona I am always disappointed and it causes me to back up. Public image does not make the man. And being gifted can create a lot of illusions we eagerly buy into. In our minds we can form one-sided, sentimental relationships with our favorite players (Hollywood star, musician, etc.), all based in fantasy. We idolize people who don't actually exist because we've made them up in our minds. In a similar way, women complain about being loved just for their bodies and not known for who they really are. So it is good to "unfriend" these kinds of ghosts.

Mind you, football, like most everything, has always had it's bad guys. And nobody who knows the game wants it regulated into a tea party. But really, when increasing violence becomes the objective, and winning at all costs is the only motivation, (witness Spygate, Bountygate, Deflategate, etc.) then something is wrong. The game is on the dangerous road to the Roman coliseum. No joke.

I find myself wondering about us too. It is a strange enmeshment. Our own identities become wrapped up with our teams. We're no longer merely fans. When we say we're going to the Super Bowl we mean it personally. And we sometimes take it personally when our teams don't do well, as if they have directly failed us and altered our lives forever. It must be a great weight for particular players to realize that thousands, perhaps even millions, are vicariously living out their own desires for success and excellence through them.

Fantasy of course, in the world of the football money changers is now big business too. And money does drive the game. But it's worth remembering that the coin of Caesar is not the currency of heaven. And Hollywood stars, sports heroes and any famous person, will not find entrance there based on their popularity, or performance in their field. They may be known the world-over, yet still hear The Lord say: "Depart from Me. I never knew you." One of my favorite quarterbacks recently said he doesn't think God "cares a whole lot about the outcome (of a game). He cares about the people involved." -A Rodgers, SI wire. I agree. As Jesus said: "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world yet lose his soul." Mark 8:36. The measure of success in this world is hardly the measure of success in the next.

So, is there room for football on a Sunday? I hope so. With a few cautions. Like anything we enjoy, there is a temptation to go overboard and to give inordinate amounts of attention to what we love until before we know it we're in a kind of bondage to it.

It's good to remember that worship and recreation/ entertainment, are different things. And it's good to remember, as Archbishop Fulton Sheen pointed out that "If you do not worship God, you worship something, and nine times out of ten it will be yourself." (Sports can definitely become a vehicle for the vicarious worship of oneself, even as a spectator.) Archbishop Sheen reminded us, " we have a duty to worship God, not because He will be imperfect and unhappy if we do not, but because we will be imperfect and unhappy." He also wisely noted that "All these externalizations are signs that we are trying

to escape God and the cultivation of the soul". So, first things first.

In the meantime it is helpful to understand that our attraction to physical and moral excellence touches on our yearning for the transcendent, which will only be completely realized in Christ. He is the fullness of all excellence! That is why excellence is exciting to see in any area. Sports is no exception. Pope John Paul II expresses this beautifully:

"...every sport, at both the amateur and competitive level, requires basic human qualities such as rigorous preparation, continual training, awareness of one's personal limits, fair competition, acceptance of precise rules, respect for one's opponent and a sense of solidarity and unselfishness. Without these qualities, sport would be reduced to mere effort and to a questionable, soulless demonstration of physical strength.

"When sports are played and understood in the right way, they are an extraordinary expression of a person's best inner energies and of his ability to overcome difficulties, to set goals to be reached through sacrifice, generosity and determination in facing the difficulties of competition."

All lessons to be learned and disciplines to be cultivated in facing the ever present challenges and battles that need to be won in our own lives!

This contribution is available at http://missionaryinthemodernworld.blogspot.com/2015/01/a-passing-look-at-football_0.html
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Joys of a Failure: The Guiding Goodness [at CatholicSoup]

With my job here in Denver as an Emergency Assistance Adviser, I help those in need pay down their bills, specifically rent and utilities. One of the things I see the most among my clients is a down, stressed, worried face, the face of failure. So often they are in tears coming into the office because of the burden they have of paying off bills, or debt. I always hear "life is tough" and "it's tough out there."

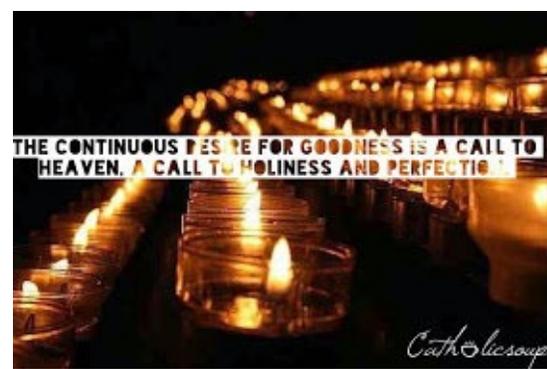
In my mind it has to be tough.



Life has to be hard, and we have to go through those rough times of suffering and pain. The beauty of suffering is knowing that it prepares us for something greater. Life has to be tough or else what would there be to gain? Saint Rose of Lima once said that if we knew the value suffering has, we would pray for it. The philosophy over this is great to think about because it reveals to us that through our pain, our struggles, our burdens and worries we can understand that Heaven, the greatness and goodness of all Beauty and Glory, is real.

Look at the world for instance, we can agree that there is goodness in the world. A concrete goodness like the air, the water, the land and even our hearts that supply blood by way of the veins throughout our bodies. But more fundamental, I think what else is good is our personal ambition and our success, otherwise we wouldn't strive to do good. Face it, there is a desire for success and as rappers Biggie and 2pac would say, "Get Money."

Humanity throughout the course of history strives for success. We strive for that perfect job, we strive for that perfect relationship and that "dream home." For those in third world countries it's called "El Sueno Americano" or the American dream. The fact is that goodness, is always moving for the greater, we see this because we are always striving for something greater, for something better. Notice that there is never enough money, never a nice enough phone, or (and I love this) never a final Apple Product that tops them all. The beauty is that because of this desire for permanent Goodness, there has to be something that IS greater than all the rest otherwise, there would be an infinite regress of good things. This is Heaven, with perfect unity and relationship with God the father who is the primary Goodness. That continuous desire for goodness is a call to Heaven, a call to holiness and perfection.



But why the struggles? The answer to me is that we need those struggles and pains to strive for something better. It should be a reminder for us to learn to seek goodness, not only earthly goodness of success but Eternal goodness of holiness. Struggle prepares us, pain prepares us and teaches us what we are really made for, that is Joy and peace with our Father in Heaven. I'm reminded of getting burned as a kid, I didn't know what I was doing, all I knew was that it hurt and I wasn't doing it again. I wish I can say that from that moment on I walked away from the stove telling myself that fire was hot and you know what maybe I'm not suppose to be in the kitchen.

The joy, is that on our journey to success there will be failure and times will get tough, but if its not tough how can we be molded? I like to say when the journey is tough, the destination will be great. If we can see how God is working in our lives through the suffering and through the trials, there will be an awakening of our own spirit, to strive for that goodness and seek true happiness by virtue and holiness. Today, being the feast of St. Thomas Aquinas here's a perfect quote.

"Man's beatitude or happiness consists in this: to see God through God's essence." -Saint Thomas Aquinas

This contribution is available at <http://www.catholicsoup.blogspot.com/2015/01/joys-of-failure-guiding-goodness.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

A Deaf Man Cured [at Bible Meditations]



They brought to [Jesus] a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and then he spat and touched his tongue. Then looking up to heaven, he signed and said to him, “Ephphatha,” that is, “Be opened.” And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. Mark 7: 32-35

Who brought the deaf man to Jesus? Whoever “they” were, they obviously loved the man enough to want him healed. Why did Jesus feel the need to take the man away from them and heal him in private?

Maybe the man had to be separated from his loved ones—at least for a time—in order for the healing to be effective. Well-meaning loved ones can’t always be part of our healing process. Sometimes they simply don’t have the resources. Sometimes they have issues that prevent them from cooperating with what is needed for our healing...The deaf man’s family loved him enough to bring him to Jesus. They may have grieved that he could never hear them or share his own thoughts clearly. Over the years, a pattern may have evolved whereby he relied on his family, and they became used to being his link to the world. Welcome as his recovery might seem, what if the thought of his independence threatened his family? What if the loss of his family as intermediaries was threatening to the man himself? Maybe he needed to rely directly and exclusively on Jesus.

Sometimes the ones we love the most are the ones we have the most trouble communicating with. Over years, unhealthy patterns of selective listening or negativity can lead to misunderstanding. We may hear our loved ones without really listening...Conversely, we may feel like we’re wasting our breath when others seem unable or unwilling to hear us or validated the feelings we’re trying to express. We beat around the bush when it feels too risky to share what is in our hearts.

Maybe Jesus separated the deaf-mute from his loved ones until the man could become grounded in his own identity as a child of God. Perhaps then the man could afford to hear what his family had to say and had the courage to speak his mind with honesty and kindness.

When we find it challenging to speak our own hearts and minds, or when we notice ourselves turning a deaf ear to the needs of others, maybe we need to take some time to be alone with God.

Reflection: How is being able to hear what others have to say related to being able to speak effectively?

Prayer: Holy Spirit, when I find myself deaf to others or unable to speak my mind and heart, open the lines of communication blocked by ego or fear.

“Your Faith Has Made You Well: Jesus Heals in the New Testament”

Copyright 2014 by Barbara Hosbach

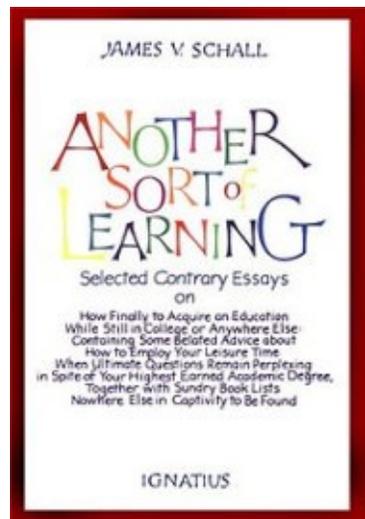
Paulist Press, Inc., Mahwah, N.J. www.paulistpress.com

Used with Permission

This contribution is available at <http://www.biblemeditations.net/archives/2426>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Notes from the Underground [at My Path to Faith]



A year or so ago, I published a post and added a page to the blog called “Catholic Classics Reading List” and at the time I intended to make some sort of use of that as a theme for much of what goes on here. However, ADD set in and the idea was soon forgotten. I’d like to make an effort to overcome the old ADD and carry on with that idea. To do that requires I provide some background on the impetus behind the idea, which lies specifically with Fr. James Schall’s book, *Another Sort of Learning*, a book that was published nearly 30 years ago and is about confronting “the truth of things.” Given the state of our educational system today, the best way, possibly the only way to do that is by independent reading. You might think Fr. Schall would be talking about the “great books” but that doesn’t quite get to his point. He writes, “But the reading of great books does not do the trick, if I might call it that. What does the trick are books that tell the truth. And usually these books are very difficult for a student to come by. They are “notes from the underground,” to steal a phrase from Dostoyevsky.”

You’re probably wondering where to find these “notes from the underground”. Not to worry, *Another Sort of Learning* is filled with lists of these books, one or more at the end of each chapter. For me, that’s one of the things I’ve treasured the most from what Fr. Schall has done. Not all of the books Fr. Schall lists are easy to find, some are quite expensive. You’ve probably never heard of a good number of the books Fr. Schall mentions. For example, here are the three lists that appear at the end of Chapter 5:

Three Books on Education:

1. John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*.
2. Christopher Dawson, *The Crisis of Western Education*.
3. Jacques Maritain, *The Education of Man: The Educational Philosophy of Jacques Maritain*.

Four Books on Philosophy and Literature by Marion Montgomery:

1. *Reflective Journey toward Order: Essays on Dante, Wordsworth, Eliot, and Others*.
2. *Why Flannery O’Connor Stayed Home*.
3. *Why Poe Drank Liquor*.
4. *Why Hawthorne Was Melancholy*.

Eight Books on Christianity and Political Thought:

1. Jacques Maritain, *Man and the State*.
2. Charles N. R. McCoy, *The Structure of Political Thought*.
3. Heinrich Rommen, *The State in Catholic Thought*.
4. Rodger Charles, *The Social Teaching of Vatican II*.
5. John Courtney Murray, *We Hold These Truths*.
6. Thomas Molnar, *Politics and the State*.
7. Yves Simon, *The Philosophy of Democratic Government*.
8. Glenn Tinder, *Political Thinking: The Perennial Questions*

Reading has been critical to my continuing conversion, and I love finding new books to read, good books, and I thought I had heard of most of the best books available. Yet I can say that, of the authors on these lists, I'd only heard of Newman, Dawson, Maritan and John Courtney Murray. And, while not all of these books are, strictly or theologically speaking Catholic, or even by Catholics, in that they show us the way to "the truth of things", they are definitely worth being part of any faithful Catholic's reading plan. And that's why I started the idea of a Catholic Classics Reading List – to share this wonderful discovery.

I encourage you to pick up a copy of *Another Sort of Learning* and see for yourself. In the meantime, my plan for this year is to read and share a little bit about five or six of the books I've discovered from this delightful work in the hope you'll find something you enjoy too.

This contribution is available at <http://inconversion.wordpress.com/2015/02/04/02-04-2015-notes-from-the-underground/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Don't feel sorry for me... [at La Joie Inattendue]

I see you looking at me as I herd my handful of kids into the supermarket. I know that reaction well. It usually goes like this: the eyebrows raise, then the eyes look down, and then either a silent whistle or a chuckle to oneself. The body-language reflects the other all-too-common and maddening comments:

“Better you than me.”

“You got your hands full.”

“You’re a busy woman.”

All of them are wrought with sarcasm, and I never understand how a passer-by would find these things helpful to say. Are they trying to evoke some sympathy?

Listen. I don’t want your sympathy. I don’t say this out of anger or defensiveness, waiting to pounce on the slightest good intention and label it as misguided. I REALLY don’t want or even need your sympathy. And you know why?

Because I am actually *happy*.

It was completely unexpected for me too.

It may surprise you, but I never envisioned having a large family. I don’t consider myself someone who is particularly good with little kids. I used to be completely ambivalent about motherhood. Sure, I wanted to be a mom. I guess. Someday. But here I am, four children in tow, and you may be feeling sorry for the plight of my overburdened, frazzled, lost sense-of-self life.

Even though I may look less than graceful as I guide my darling little strong-willed versions of myself

through the aisles, I am ultimately happy with my lot in life. The scene at the supermarket may be intensely chaotic, but I have some other more peaceful moments in my day. Don't feel sorry for me. Really. It turns out I am actually quite happy.

But do you know what I feel sorry for?

I feel sorry that motherhood is considered merely a side show of a woman's talent and education.

I feel sorry that our children have become the next measure in the keeping up with the Jones'. No longer is merely a big home and fast car the signs of success. Now our kids' academic load and athletic promise are lumped into the high stake game of comparing ourselves to others.

I feel sorry that any woman with more than two children spaced 2.5 years apart must be either a religious freak, uneducated, or both. I am sorry that for the sake of choice we have left women feeling so pressured to plan the perfect family, creating yet another measure of success to be compared.

I feel sorry that the high costs of a college education, owning a home, and day care have all bore an overwhelming fear in young couples looking to get married and have kids.

I feel sorry that there is a mentality that pervades our society, namely the equation that children = burden.

I feel sorry that I believed all these things for so long and completely overlooked the potential for joy in my life.

Because for all the responsibilities, worries, and frustrations that come with having kids, I have also experienced a whole new dimension to life's purpose, and that happiness and love ultimately override the fears.

So please don't feel sorry for me. I should not be the focus of your sympathy. And even if I may not exactly be smiling right at this moment, please know that I am truly happy.

This contribution is available at <http://kimsununexpectedjoy.blogspot.com/2015/01/dont-feel-sorry-for-me.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

My Saint 2015 [at A Catholic Heart For Home]

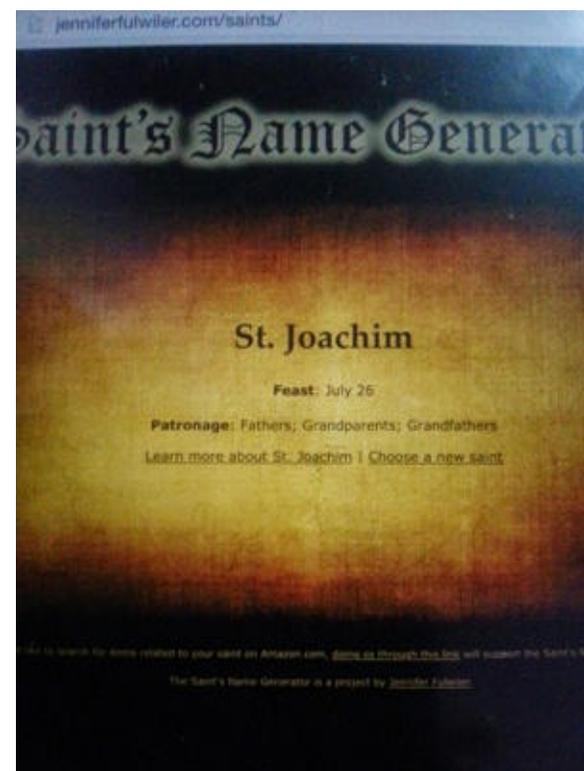
On the first day of the year, late into the afternoon I finally sat down to see which Saint wanted to pick me this year. I have been using

[Saint Generator](#)

for a few years now and I have not been very good with always keeping up with my saint or asking their intercession.

This I year I told myself it would be different. I am going to remember to celebrate his/her Feast Day (I did remember to do that last year) and I would ask their intercession in every circumstance.

I sat and I prayed as instructed before I pressed that little button. I do not remember the prayer exactly but I did ask for a Saint that would really help me to grow closer to God and would be very helpful to me in my life this year. I took a deep breathe and pressed the button.



The saint who is the patron of married couples picked the girl who is single but would love to be married. I had a few minutes of hmmm.

St Joachim..... I have a deep love for his daughter and his Grandson. I pray a yearly novena to his wife but I don't think I ever really paid much attention to him.



Joachim in Hebrew means "

God prepares

" or "God will establish".

He is the husband of St Anne

The father of the Blessed Virgin Mary

The grandfather of Jesus Christ

He is the patron saint of fathers, grandfathers, grandparents, married couples, cabinet makers and linen traders.

He shares a Feast Day with his wife, July 26



I can speculate a lot about why this saint picked me and believe me I have, although I think it's safe to say I will not be going into the linen trade soon, he could have picked me for any reason. God could be using him to prepare me for anything and I want to be open to that.

St Joachim pray for me.

Prayer to Saint Joachim

O great and glorious Patriarch, Saint Joachim, what joy is mine when I consider that thou wast chosen among all God's holy ones to assist in the fulfilment of the mysteries of God, and to enrich our earth with the great Mother of God, Mary most holy!

By this singular privilege, thou hast become most powerful with both the Mother and her Son, so as to be able to obtain for us the graces that are needful to us; with great confidence I have recourse to thy mighty protection and I commend to thee all my needs and those of my family, both spiritual and temporal; and especially do I entrust to thy keeping the particular favour that I desire and look for from thy fatherly intercession.

And since thou wast a perfect pattern of the interior life, obtain for me the grace of interior recollection and a spirit of detachment from the transitory goods of this life, together with a lively and enduring love for Jesus and Mary. Obtain for me in like manner a sincere devotion and obedience to Holy Church and the sovereign pontiff who rules over her: to the end that I may live and die in faith and hope and perfect charity, ever invoking the holy names of Jesus and Mary, and may I thus be saved. Amen.

This contribution is available at <http://acatholicheartforhome.blogspot.com/2015/01/my-saint-2015.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

The Spirit Within [at Travels of a New Christian]



I did not name my blog, Travels of a New Christian, just to note that I am a new Christian in need of learning. That is very true, but more so, it is because learning requires traveling; both physically and spiritually. Whether it is as a child or teen walking to school and stepping out the paces from one class room to the next; or visiting a museum, taking in a play, seeing a movie, strolling along a beach's tide line, camping in a forest; or perhaps just rocking gently in one's backyard hammock and watching nature evolve before one's eyes, travel is always the catalyst for learning. You have to move to groove.

Now I could easily contend, and I do, that with each spark or impulse that jumps the gap of our synapses is also one step of a journey that not only the mind and body takes, but also the spirit potential. We are all travelers by design of God. It is He who has divined our foot falls throughout our lives. I see that now clearly, though it has taken me close to six years to come to this truth and know it for what it is; not only faith, but also knowledge. For faith comes from what is heard, while knowledge comes from what is learned. Yes, faith is required for salvation, and faith is also the precursor to the knowledge that will bring us perfection in the world to come. It is by our travels that we discover both faith and knowledge, and hopefully distill our imperfect natures to perfect by its essence of wisdom. And so in traveling we have the opportunity of the unification of our spirit, our intellect, and our body.

I came across an interesting statistic recently. In 2009, the Barna Group polled American Christians, and their results yielded the following:

In regards to the Holy Spirit, 58% of all Christians either strongly or moderately believe that the Holy Spirit is "a symbol of God's power or presence but is not a living entity." Ponder this concept. Central to the Christian faith is a belief in the Trinity – the belief that God is three distinct persons of one substance or essence. Yet, it's faithful, at least 58% of them, believe in the clearly diminished or symbolic role of the Holy Spirit. Only 33% affirmed a belief that the Holy Spirit was indeed a person – a living entity –

with a full 9% without an expressible opinion at all; nearly one-in-ten Christians do not know what to think.

This seemingly odd statistic caused me to ponder the whole idea of the spirit; not of God's, but of man's. In truth, there is little offered on the subject of man's spirit. Neither bible nor catechism teaches much on the subject directly. While libraries are dedicated to the theology of Christianity and the methodologies of salvation, there is little theology on the nature of man's spirit and little methodology that clarifies the nature and role of a man's spirit. I know the spirit exists; not just because of the rhyme that the bible tells me so, but more so because I have led the past few years in the pursuit of my spirit. I can happily state that it is much better off now than it was previously, and that my spirit still has a long way to go before it has a firm handle on the rudder of my choices.

In examining the nature of my spirit, I have come to realize that I believe in a variation of the tripartite concept of man. Now tripartite refers to the concept that man is composed of three distinct elements or parts: the body, soul, and spirit. I honestly see a different reality.

I believe there is a body that exists in the physical world and is subject to all Natural Laws and events. The body is what is seen in the physical world. The body does not experience existence, but merely exists as a substance with a particular order; like any animate or inanimate substance or object. The body however is responsible for manifesting knowledge in a physical realm. A new body is created by parent bodies through sexual reproduction. A body is mortal.

I believe there is within the body what is called a mind or an intellect. We view the mind as non-physical, though we acknowledge that it is the result of the biological and chemical events that occur within the brain processes. As such it is inherently physical.

The mind experiences existence. It is conscious – it perceives through reasoning – of the body's existence, its own consciousness as a reasoning force, and the physical and spiritual realms about it; to one degree or another. It 'experiences' more so than merely 'senses', as our physical senses do; 'experiences' referring to the ability to reason or judge sensory input, converting it into a knowledge that becomes the foundation of choice for an individual. Touching a flame and sensing pain does nothing to inhibit the body from touching the flame again. It is the mind that creates the habit of avoiding the flame, not the nerve endings on a finger.

The mind, or intellect, is created along with the body, and is indivisible with the body. It is mortal.

The mind is that portion of man that has free will or choice to act as one decides through reasoning of one's own experiences, while the body then carries out the choice of the mind. The mind and body is that part of man that can choose to disobey God's condition of love and manifest that choice in the physical realm, as it is that part of a man that has no restraints to the liberty of perfection; the expression of God's natural law. Thus, the mind/body has the ability to sin.

I believe there is within the body what is referred to as a spirit. This is a spiritual element that is, or was, divinely created separate from the body and mind, and is eternal. Three options for the existence of the spirit would be that God creates a spirit at the moment He places that spirit within a conceived life (creationism), or that all spirits were made at some point preceding their use by God (pre-existence), or that the spirit is produced by the parents of the new human (traducianism). The Catholic Church has rejected the latter two in favor of the first assertion.

“The Church teaches that every spiritual soul is created immediately by God—it is not “produced” by the parents—and also that it is immortal: it does not perish when it separates from the body at death, and it will be reunited with the body at the final Resurrection.” CCC366

I believe that a spirit is perfect in that it cannot sin. It is that “image of God” that is stated in the book of Genesis three times; Genesis 1:26–28, Genesis 5:1–3, and Genesis 9:6. In man’s choice to do evil in the world, it is not the spirit that participates in such thought, word, or action. One’s spirit is the immutable link to God and is the librarian, one might say, of God’s will and Word. In other words, all of mankind knows the difference between good and evil from the moment of their conception. That knowledge is the resultant essence of the spirit, and thus makes its presence and influence upon the mind and body the essential part to salvation and sanctification.

It appears logical the following argument. If Christianity is to assert that at some moment in time God creates a spirit within each new human body, then it would follow that this element – the spirit – is “good” as all things that God creates is good.

To make an argument that a spirit can be “bad” would be illogical to the Character of God and His actions. There are some who believe in the pre-existence of souls or spirits, and that God places them into the bodies of humans at their conception or sometime afterwards. They further might argue that these spirits can choose between good and evil before they are placed into a new body; hence scriptural references to God’s knowledge of who is good or evil prior to their ability to act; like Jacob and Esau. This seems illogical with one simple question put forward. Why would God place an evil spirit within the new body of a new human?

The historical concept of tripartite assumes the term “soul”. I suggest it to be a vague reference to the bond God created in enjoining a spirit into the unity of the mind and the body. Scripture – both Old and New Testament – does little to give the term “soul” a clear definition. Even the Catechism of the Catholic Church acknowledges some confusion of definition; see Paragraph 6., II., 362-368. I propose, therefore, the soul might just represent the tripartite unity within man – the body, the mind, and the spirit – that has the capacity and desire to share in God’s life and creation, and it is through this union that man possesses the ability to unite the physical and spiritual realms.

As all three elements co-exist within one man, there must be a singular balance between the three elements for each person that promotes one’s good relationship with God, and as simple observation of history and current events details lavishly, this is apparently a most difficult balance to achieve. The mind/body – being corruptible – causes sin to take place in the world. The spirit – being in the image of God – is without sin; unlikely compatriots for any cause of good.

For a person to minimize sin in their lives it would follow that the person encourages the spirit to leadership of the unity described. This would be defined as that proverbial “angel on one’s shoulder”, where one carefully and obediently follows the good counsel of the “angel”. I do not mean to minimize the work of the Holy Spirit in this matter of good counsel, but rather hope to emphasize the linkage between one’s own spirit and that of the Holy Spirit. Think of it as using the “cloud” to store your data. As one’s spiritual connection to God is permanent, so too is one’s access to God’s data. In essence, one’s spirit is God’s Spirit, and the flow of the Holy Spirit is the data flow of God’s conscience.

For a person who chooses to lead a life of sin unrepentant, it would require an effort to diminish the presence and influence of their own spirit as a reasoning factor for their mind to consider and weigh

judiciously. With a spirit strong of presence and influence, it would constitute a constant reprobation for an individual seeking their own personal desires at the expense of others. There would be a certain and nagging imperative to put away such a counsel.

In reverse, it reminds me of what Jesus had to say to Peter a short while before the Christ headed to His fate in Jerusalem. Jesus has imparted to the apostles His need to enter Jerusalem, suffer at the hands of His enemies, die and be resurrected on the third day. Jesus was always reflecting God's Spirit in all ways, and He was doing so here. Peter, however, viewed this revelation from the perspective of the body and mind. He wanted to protect Jesus, to achieve the results for immediate life without the necessary sacrifice required to continue life, and so Peter rebuked Jesus for speaking so. Jesus was clear:

“Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Jesus, being the incarnation, had the capacity to speak in such a manner and mean it. Jesus is simply stating a fact; that the concerns of God are best addressed through the spirit and not through the mind or body. This is, of course, the constant theme of all of Jesus' teachings; live by the spirit.

I'm not sure any human has that capacity. One's spirit rarely enjoys such a lofty authority over one's mind and body. Monasteries exist for the sole function of enabling a person to lead a spiritual life through the abstinence of the worldly offerings. Monks do this in that pursuit; to lift the spirit over the fallen inclinations of the mind and the body. It's a tough life for those who seek it and an impossible life for those who believe the world has more to offer than God.

What the human can do, though, is speak with similar conviction when they incline their mind and body to exert such authority over their tripartite partner; the spirit. Being “fallen” means just that; the dominance of the mind and body over the spirit. It is the essential quality of unrepentant man, the most misunderstood aspect of Jesus' teachings, and the least discussed.

I mean misunderstood because of the necessity of man to live by the spirit and not of the flesh or the intellect. In living by the spirit, there is a truth that pervades one's experience; that all things are of and by God, and that true liberty of man is found not in a lack of restraints and an embrace of personal desire, but rather in a freedom from the oppression that unrestrained desires bring to a mortal man. Man cannot separate himself on any level from the absolute truths that God has defined creation and mankind with. The further we step away from God's truths, the greater our consciences bellow in our mind's ear like the Greek perversion of woman and bull, the Minotaur. In our prideful and ferocious labyrinth of sin, the last thing any man or woman wants to acknowledge is their spirit; that image of God within us. There is little wonder that Jesus was to suffer and die upon the cross. He was the perfect reflection of spirit, and thus a reminder of man's desire to escape true communion with God and man in favor of individual despotism.

Few will like what I say next, but I sense that man's desires intrude greatly into the function of the Church; rendering it somewhat of a facsimile of itself. Man hopes to obey God, but he also hopes to not gaze too deeply into the labyrinth I just mentioned. To do so is to face conviction by the Holy Spirit, and to recognize the limits one has placed upon their own spirit within. This reluctance animates man to reflect more so upon the ritual than the spiritual. The Church as seen as one body is the proper vision, but with a focus upon the ritual, the spirit is rendered as neutral to the task of preparing the individual to be part of that one body of the Church.

In being neutral, there appears little purpose for the spirit, and with little purpose, the spirit is easily dismissed by the more immediately satisfying accomplishments of the mind and body. We call it pride. It can be argued that the mind and body is best suited to leadership of the tripartite being. The mind and body are modeled for the proposed truth that the society, the one body, is the engine by which the individual thrives. I contend the truth is just the opposite. I contend that the individual, the spirit, is the sole force for the good of the society. A free and forceful spirit – in authority over the mind and body – naturally expresses the will of God, and in so doing acts as a model for other individuals to do likewise. This is evangelization. A strong spirit guides the individual to align with natural, moral, and just civil law; pointing in the singular direction of God’s will and purpose for our lives. Coercion by the mind and body for the short haul, the immediate fix, cannot prepare the individual for the long and arduous task of conforming to God’s liberty over man’s freedom.

There is a reason God walked His people the long way to Canaan. We prefer to see it as a punishment for man’s disobedience, when indeed it can be suggested that God merely knew something man did not. The road to redemption is a road best suited for the spirit.

This contribution is available at <http://travelsOfANewChristian.com/2014/11/10/the-spirit-within/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Update on 40 weeks [at Small Paul]

The reason I have not posted in a while is because of some personal developments I in my progress with the "40 Weeks" workshop. Everyone has had events in their childhood that shape the way they think. The events that are bad create unhealthy behaviors based on fear and other things. They become barriers to the full potential of the future adult. Over the years I have been able to find some of mine and clean the wound, sort of speak, by looking at the event with an adult mind. When the wound is cleaned the behavior based on that event changes for the better. This is dysfunctionality.

Visualize a building with some rotten or twisted wood in the foundation and all the wood coming from those bad pieces being not good. If you replace the bad foundation wood with good wood, then all the wood connected to it automatically becomes good.

Visualize a computer program that is based on a little bit of bad information. All the information delivered from that program is a bid false. Correct the original flaw and all the other information it give out from that time forward is now true.

The reason I have not posted in a while is because this workshop is remodeling or me. Or, if you like the other visualization, correcting some original flaws in some of my programs.

I have been living with this broken house or flawed programs for my whole life. I have been unaware that I was this damaged. Now I have to get used to a better house or better data and when God's healing is completed, a new me. I am not used to my new behavior because it is new.

This contribution is available at <http://goingdeeper-catholic.blogspot.com/2015/01/update-on-40-weeks.html>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

Homeschooling is not my vocation {and it isn't yours either} [at Blossoming Joy]

I don't have a vocation to homeschool any more than you have a vocation to send your kids to be taught by Miss Betty. We share the same vocation and the same obligation as the primary educators of our children. The details after that are simply a matter for prayerful and prudential discernment. I am "called" to homeschool insofar as I am called to pursue holiness. Prayer, reason, intellect, observation... all combine to help us make the right decision for our kids.

Goals worth pursuing aren't always emotional satisfying -- and the burdens experienced during homeschooling can cause confusion if we are expecting grace to make things easy for us. It is not uncommon to interpret happy feelings as God's stamp of approval on our choices. That emotional confusion often leads parents (especially moms) to declare:

"I'm just not called to homeschool like you are. I'm not very patient or good at teaching. Now you... you are so good at it. You definitely have a calling that I do not have."

And really, just... Nope. The right thing is not usually the easy thing.

Homeschooling is one of the greatest blessings of my life. Even so, the rewards aren't always temporal. It is better than awesome (in the cultural sense of the word) because it is good, in the eternal sense. It allows for a little more movement into God's dream for the family. But, it is a practical mistake for homeschoolers to make it more romantic or other worldly than it is. And I'll be honest with you...

If you can hold a job and manage to get through a day without getting fired, lost, forgetting most of your appointments, hitting anyone, screaming, or throwing things, then you can homeschool. If you can read, follow directions, order things online, talk on the telephone, navigate the library, communicate with people, and research how-to's, then you can homeschool. But it's not just a job to home educate... it is intertwined permanently with your vocation to love your own.

I won't lie. Homeschooling is tough. *Because parenting is tough.* I am far better suited to other things (for example, I'd make a darn good crazy cat lady). Fortunately, I know that anything worth doing requires some struggle. And I know through the example of the saints (and Christ Himself), that God asks us to follow Him to uncomfortable and surprising places.

The biggest mistake that discerning parents make is to make their decision based on feeling. They assume that just because a thing is scary, overwhelming, unknown, and out of their comfort zone, that God must not want them there. At a very fundamental level of discernment, this is a mistake. You know what would have felt awesome this morning? Eating my breakfast in a quiet house with all of the kids being fed and taught by other people... somewhere else. But that is not the decision that my husband and I have discerned to be the best for my kids or, frankly, for me.

So, should you homeschool?

There are a lot of things that go into a decision like that and there is rarely a Divine lightening bolt which

prescribes the nitty gritty details of the Christian life. I think you should because homeschooling is amazing and I want everyone to have an amazing life. But I humbly acknowledge that there is no magic pill for the perfect education of our children. Human nature and behavior are complex. What isn't complex is our vocation... We are called to be holy and to lead our children to Christ. Once we have made that top priority, each detail should be able to pass the test: *Does it lead them closer to Jesus?*

The biggest obstacle to success in my homeschool will always be *me* and my limitations and failures. But as Mother Teresa said, "Christ does not call us to be successful, He calls us to be faithful." And as she exemplified so beautifully in her own life, that usually looks like a whole lot of grace and hard work. Welcome to *your* vocation... whether or not you homeschool.

"Many people mistake our work for our vocation. Our vocation is the love of Jesus."

Blessed Teresa of Calcutta

This contribution is available at <http://blossomingjoy.squarespace.com/blog/2014/11/19/homeschooling-is-not-vocation>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |

Perfect Love [at A Catholic Moment]



I remember the day my son was born. I remember every detail. At that moment I first saw him, I felt an emotion I have yet to be able to explain with words. Up to that point, I had been afraid. I had feared being a father. I had feared being responsible for another person, and what if I mess up? There's a life at stake here, someone else's. I had feared all that was to come because it was unknown to me. I did not know what to expect.

I was afraid of the sleepless nights, the messes, the potty training, the discipline and being able to tell him no when I needed to. I was afraid of the decisions I would have to make, and mostly, I was afraid that it wasn't all about just my wife and I anymore. We could no longer simply do whatever we wanted at the drop of a hat, because we were now responsible for this child who has come into our lives.

But then I saw him, and all those fears went away. The emotion had overcome me, and what I witnessed was a pure miracle. God's handiwork. And it was amazing! I let my emotions take over. I let my guard down and any fear I had was immediately replaced by love. It was the most unbelievable, amazing, joyful love I had ever felt. I could not really find the words to explain it. It was a perfect love, and I just had a glimpse of it.

This is what the first reading is about today. As St. John writes:

“God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.”

That day, I felt that I was in God and God was in me. I felt I truly experienced the most wonderful thing that God can do – the birth of a child. It was a perfect love that drove out any fear in me about having a son, and that's exactly what John says later in his first letter:

“There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear because fear has to do with punishment, and so one who fears is not yet perfect in love.”

Did I know there would be challenging times ahead? Sure. But I was no longer scared. I was no longer afraid because I loved this new little person so much that I would do anything for him. It just felt right. I would let my guard down, knowing that there would be days ahead that would be tough, and later in life we may have arguments and fights. There will be days when he resents me, and there will be times when I

do not like the decisions he makes, but I will never stop loving this little guy no matter how old or big he gets.

This has to be how God feels about each of us. I know that my heart aches when my son is sad, or sick, or hurting, or making bad decisions. Imagine how Christ feels about us. I guess we know why Jesus sweat blood in the garden before they arrested Him. His heart ached that much for us, that He sweat blood! His love is a perfect love, and He wasn't afraid of how we would turn away from Him – He loves us anyway. *This* is the love that we need to have for each other, not only our kids, but our spouses, our friends, and our neighbors. Strangers on the street. Everyone. And we most definitely need to have this love for Christ.

So many times, though, we're afraid. We're afraid to let our guard down and tell people how we feel. We're afraid to show our emotions. We're afraid to talk about our faith and our spirituality, and we're afraid to cry. So often, we keep the things people do and say to us deep inside and we may "love them on the surface", but deep down we're hurt. And so many times this is not with strangers on the street, but with those close to us. Our sons and daughters. Husbands and wives.

Families and friendships can be destroyed because people are afraid to love. We are afraid we will be hurt, so we keep things inside; we keep our cards close to our chest. We get so afraid that we will be let down, that we choose to keep our guard up and try to be tough. This is the same with our faith.

God gives us signs all the time of His wonderful love and His awesome power, yet we fail to see it. We may hear Him, but we don't *listen*. We may observe Him, but we don't *see* Him. This is the point that Jesus tries to make to His disciples on the Sea of Galilee. At this point in Mark's Gospel, Jesus had just multiplied the loaves for the 5000 and then when His friends were out on the sea in rough waters, he walks out there on the waves and calms them. Yet the disciples still don't *see* Him for who he is. They don't understand that perfect love, and they are afraid, and as Mark writes, "*their hearts were hardened.*"

How often do we not see God for who He is? How often do we not *see* each other? How often have we let our hearts be hardened by this world and by what others, including our families, have done or said to us? How often have we failed to let our guard down and simply love someone for who they are because we were afraid of what they or others would think? How often have we failed to love God for who He is and what He can do because we are afraid of Him and that we are not worthy of His love and forgiveness, and His grace and power?

Maybe this is how the disciples felt in that boat. Maybe they simply felt scared and that they were not worthy of His love, and they were afraid to go out on a limb for Him, even though they had just seen two miracles. Maybe they felt it was too good to be true, like many of us do about good things that happen in this world.

Jesus said, "*Take courage, it is I, do not be afraid!*"

That's all we need to do. That's all we need to experience a perfect love. When I saw my son for the first time six years ago, like all parents, I experienced this type of love. But this is just a fraction of the love that Christ has for us. God loves us more than we can imagine, more than we could ever love anyone, and we need not be afraid when we experience this type of love. And we need not be afraid in whatever we do or encounter because Christ will walk across that water to calm us when we least expect it.

For so long I could not find the words to explain this type of love, but all I needed was two – Perfect

Love.

This contribution is available at <http://www.acatholic.org/perfect-love/>
Copyright is retained by the contributing author (follow above link for info on this piece).

| [Contents](#) |